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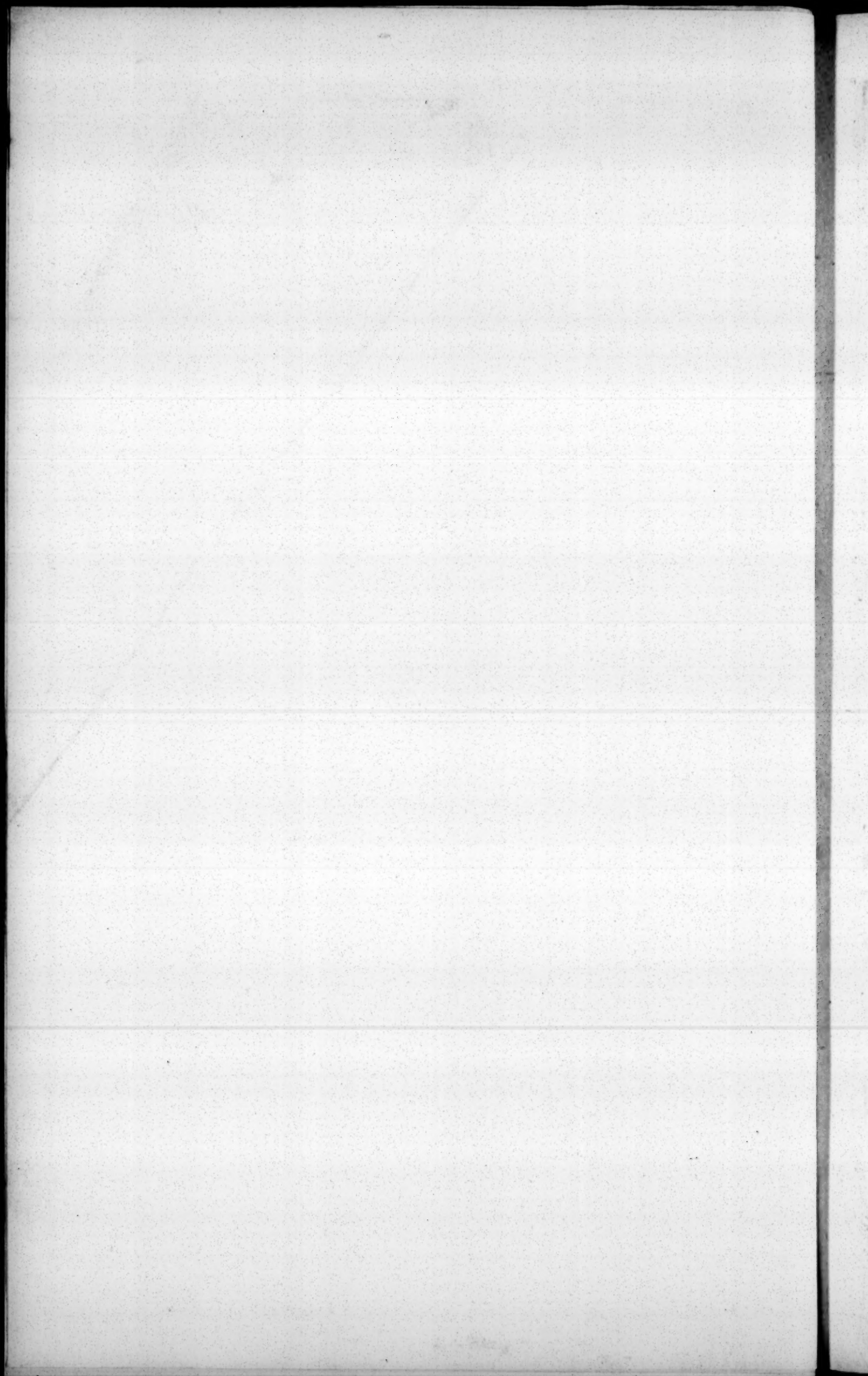
AN

ESSAY

ON

FAITH, &c.





AN
E S S A Y
ON
F A I T H,
AND ITS
CONNECTION
WITH
GOOD WORKS.

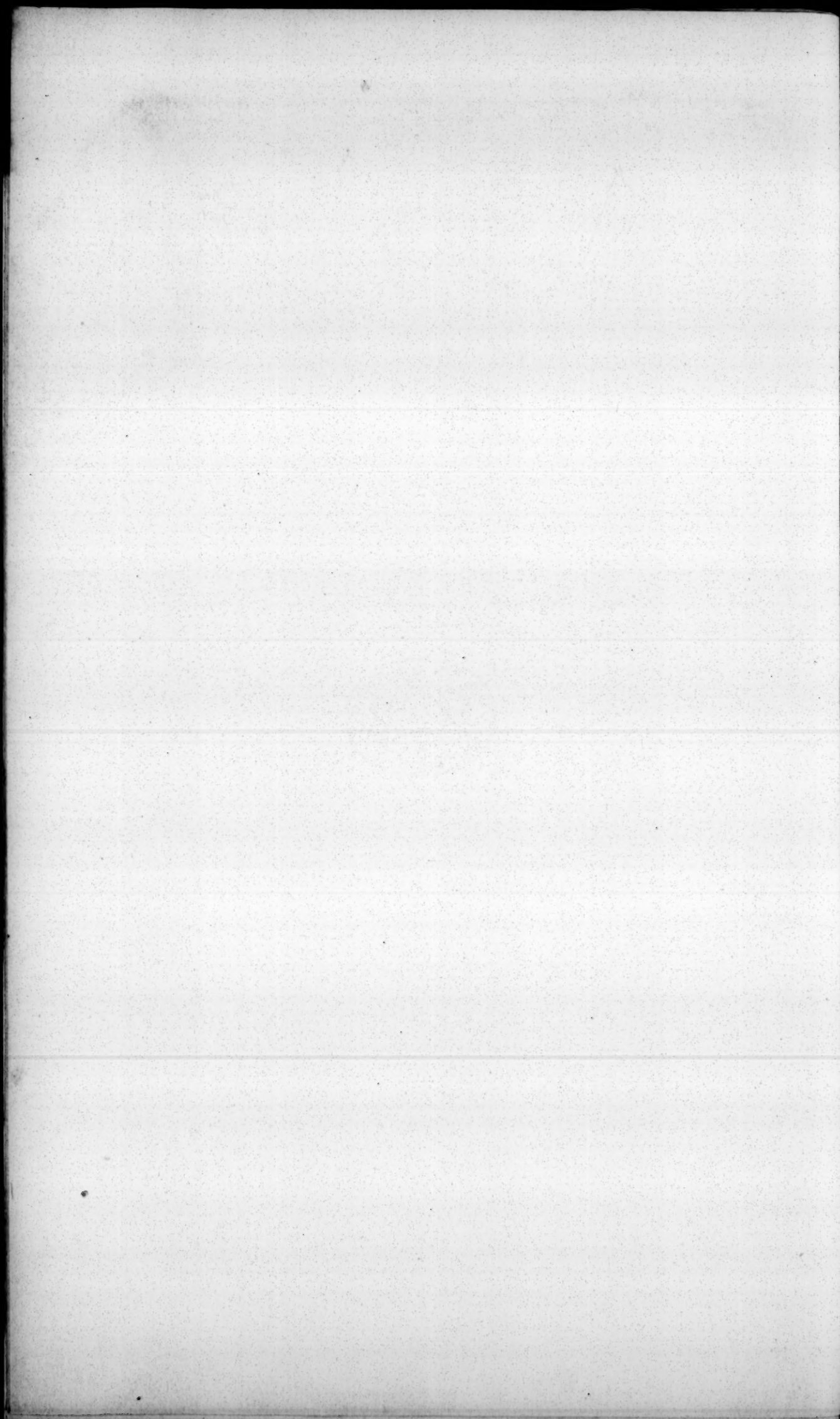
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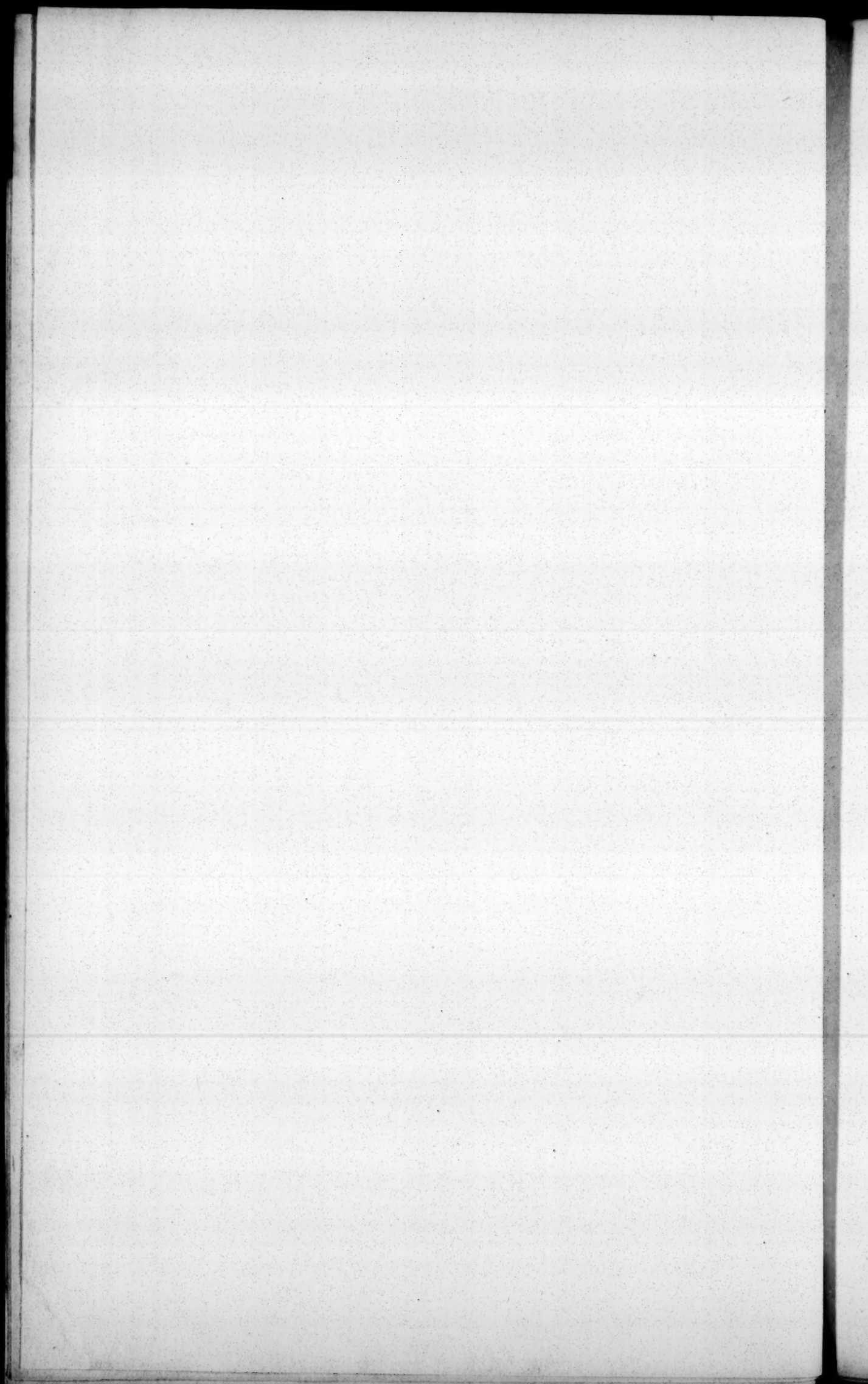
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MDCCLXXII.



TO
THE HONOURABLE
AND
MOST REVEREND
HIS GRACE
The Lord Archbishop
OF
Y O R K,
OF LEARNING, VIRTUE, RELIGION,
THE FRIEND, THE PATRON, THE EXAMPLE;
THIS ESSAY IS INSCRIBED.





P R E F A C E.

WHEN error prevails, there are two ways by which the cause of truth may be maintained; either by a direct and formal refutation of the error, or by a plain and effectual establishment of the truth.

The advocate for truth may descend into the field of controversy, he may engage every adversary that comes in his way, he may pursue and expose every single error. But error possesses a wide and dark dominion, and he who undertakes the conquest of the whole, undertakes a labour that is almost infinite. It will still find some obscure corner to

retire to, from which it will be found hard to dispossess it.

Error is various and changeable; a circumstance of which a skilful adversary will not fail to take the advantage. When his opinion is ready to be wrested from him, he will take entire possession of it again under another shape. He will lead us through all the mazes of controversy, and whilst we press hard upon him, will still find a way, amidst all its intricacies, to escape the pursuit.

He who engages in controversy, will find himself entangled in a net, where, though he may think it easy to break each single thread, yet it will be an endless labour to break them all; and whilst he is thus engaged, a skilful adversary will not forget to weave the web anew.

Controversy is apt to bring on personal

sonal disputes ; and a thousand incidents arise to lead us away from the main point, on which our strength is exercised, and consumed to no purpose. The love of victory is apt to take place of the love of truth. Even where we succeed, there is this circumstance disagreeable to a benevolent mind, that our success must be attended with another's disgrace.

There is another way of removing error, and that is by a clear and full exposition of the truth. There is something much more pleasing to a liberal mind in the establishment of truth, than in the refutation of error ; as the labour is more pleasing to rear a fair and well-proportioned edifice, than to pull down one that is misshapen, and ill-proportioned.

It is for want of being furnished early with the principles of truth, that our minds are left open to error, and that
so

so many amongst us are ever fluctuating and unstable, ever ready to follow some new seducer. He who amidst the thickest gloom of ignorance, enthusiasm, and superstition, sets up truth to public view, at once disabuses the deluded multitude. He brings the rising sunbeam to chase away those imaginary forms which kept them in awe, and which owe their existence only to darkness.

The mere removal of error, leaves the mind no more than a blank. And though it be true, that error can hardly be refuted without advancing and presenting to the mind some truths, yet these being only casual and random truths, not digested into order, nor supported on each side by those other truths with which they are closely connected, they are easily withdrawn again and lost. To give truth a solid and lasting establishment, it must be fixed on its first principles

principles as on a basis of adamant; truth must rise upon truth in due proportion and order, and all the parts must be strongly united. Against a mind thus prepared, the seducer will in vain waste his feeble efforts. The mind where truth resides is free from the power of delusion. And even such as have been enslaved by error, will at the approach of truth, feel their chains fall off as at the bidding of an angel.

I have been encouraged by considerations like these, to lay before the public a plain account of faith, hoping thereby to do more effectual service against enthusiasm, than by a direct attempt to refute its various errors.

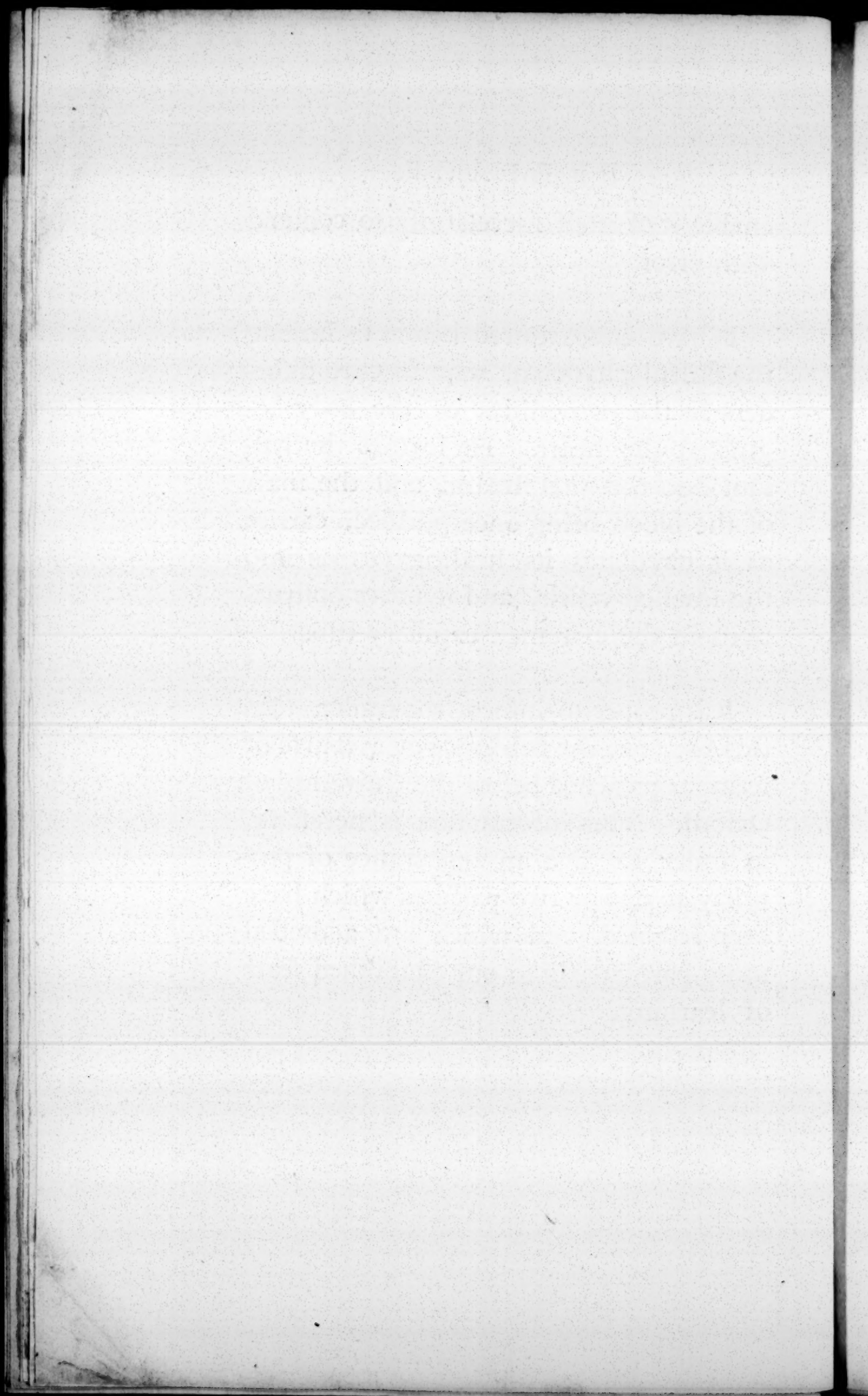
Much hath been said on the subject of faith, and excellently said, by our most eminent Divines. But I do not recollect that they have any where left us a regular Theory of faith, describing its nature,

nature, its genuine powers and effects ; defining its boundaries, and tracing as it proceeds, the line which every where divides it from the bordering enthusiasm. This hath been attempted in the following sheets, in as brief a manner as the copiousness and importance of the subject would allow. I have not entered into a consideration of those single texts of scripture which the enthusiast is eternally misapplying, but have attempted rather to build my doctrines on the general scope and design of the gospel. He who can once seize the true spirit and design of the gospel, will be the best prepared to understand the meaning of particular passages. And though this method does not furnish an answer to every single difficulty that may arise, yet it enables the intelligent reader to answer them for himself, by supplying him with those principles of truth, which will by degrees enlarge and fill his mind, and give it an internal strength that will enable

enable it of itself successfully to contend with error.

I have endeavoured herein to imitate the skilful physician, who to cure disorders in the extremities of the body begins at the heart. He infuses the balsam into the vital stream, and the mass of the blood being once purified, carries as it circulates its healing virtues into the smallest vessels, and removes obstructions in the extremest capillary tubes.

It is proper to inform the reader, that this ESSAY is the substance of a course of sermons preached before the University of Oxford. This information is necessary, in order to give an appearance of propriety to one or two passages which have been retained, and which are addressed more particularly to our established seats of learning.



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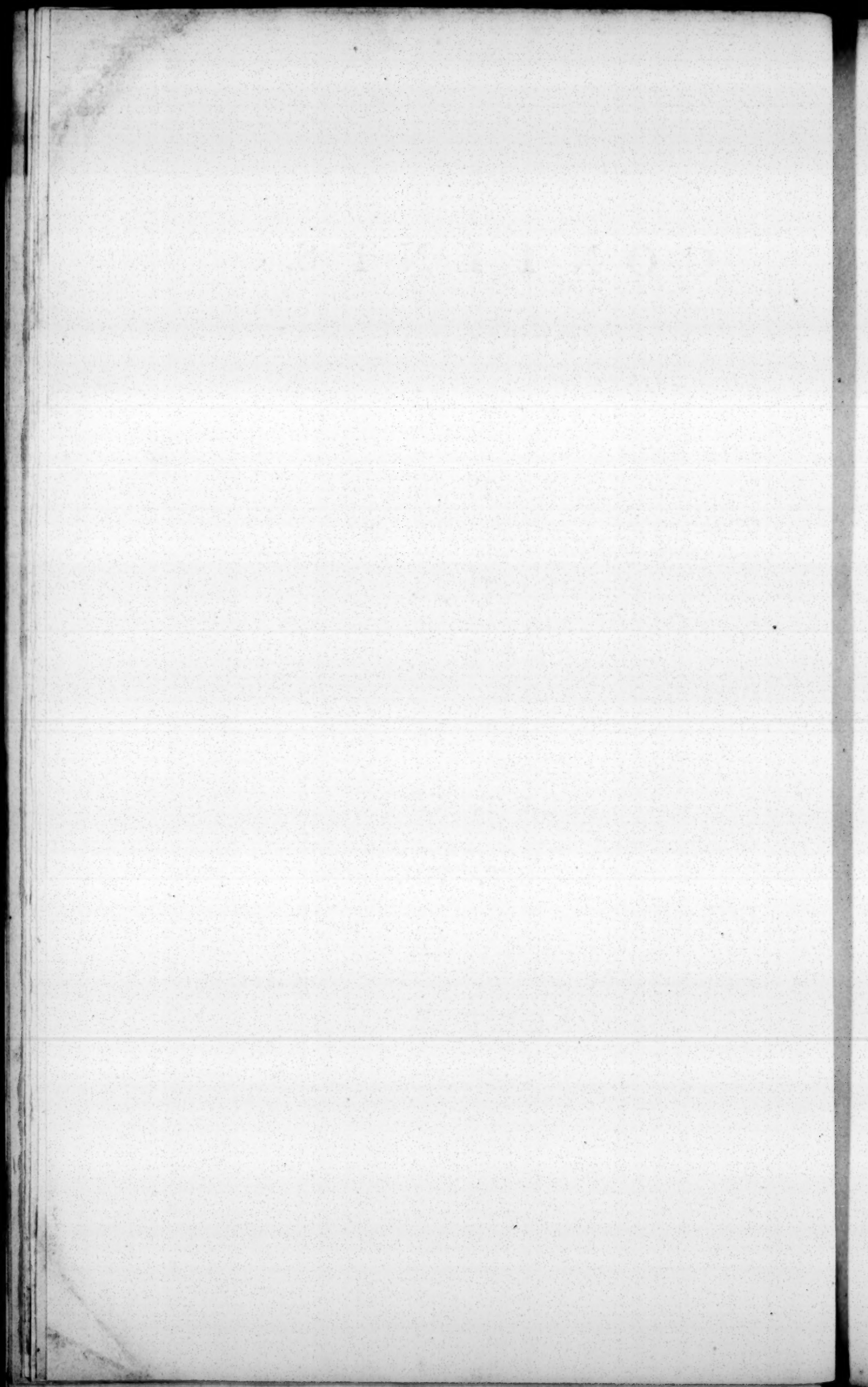
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AN





A N
ESSAY ON FAITH,
AND ITS
CONNECTION
WITH
GOOD WORKS.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

“WHAT must I do to be saved?” SECT.
I.
How important is this question, 
and how much doth it concern
us to understand it clearly! And fain
would the serious enquirer flatter himself,
B that

SECT.
I.

that it cannot be difficult to obtain a full and satisfactory solution of it, in a land where the light of the gospel is permitted to shine without obstruction, and where the word of life is freely laid open to every eye.

PROVIDENCE hath generally made truths clear as they are important. And accordingly more hath been done to illustrate this question than any other that can be proposed. To clear up this enquiry, it was that the Son of God himself came down on earth, and left behind him the sacred records of his will to guide all future ages in the way of peace.

Yet, alas! though the world hath now been in possession of this great discovery for more than seventeen centuries, when we look round on the various and inconsistent opinions which are still maintained concerning this great point, one would almost be tempted to think that the heavenly

venly truth had never yet been unveiled ^{SECT.}
to human eye, but was still surrounded ^{I.} ~~~~~
with impenetrable darkness. Propose this
question to different men amongst us, who
all pretend to fetch their information from
the scriptures, and one will affirm that
you may be saved by faith alone; ano-
ther will say, that it is necessary to add
to your faith virtue; a third will assure
you, that you may be saved without a-
ny endeavours of your own, that is in
effect, without either faith or virtue; that
we are entirely passive in the business of
our salvation, and have only to wait for
the impressions of the Holy Spirit upon
our minds; though the question itself
supposeth that something must be done
by ourselves, in order to our being saved.
“What must I DO to be saved?”

How painful must it be to every well-
wisher of mankind, to reflect how wide-
ly some must err in a matter where all
are equally concerned to think right. But

SECT. on the other hand, how pleasing to a
I. benevolent mind must be the attempt,
to guide the unhappy wanderers back
to the saving truth which they have
lost!

That these different opinions however do not arise from any want of clearness in the Revelation itself, will be readily granted on all hands. No words can represent truth so clearly as to secure it from all possibility of misrepresentation or mistake. Prejudice and passion often form so thick a cloud about the mind, as not to give admission even to the strongest ray of truth.

There is besides a singularity in the conduct of Revelation, which, at the same time that it is a proof of wisdom, and a character of divinity, doth casually leave room for the seducer to build his pernicious designs upon, and gives some appearance of solidity even to the visions of enthusiasm.

Reve-

Revelation was intended for the use of SECT.
all mankind. The book therefore in which ^{I.} it is recorded, is a popular work. The rules of faith and practice are delivered in such a manner as to be clear to the plain and untutored mind, without observing always a metaphysical precision, or pursuing a logical method. Those books of morality and religion which have been composed by the greatest understandings merely human, are studiously worked up into a regular system ; where principles are laid down, remote consequences deduced from them, truths built upon truths, and where we are at first sight struck with the just disposition of the parts, and the symmetry of the whole. Revelation is a work of a different kind. All its precepts arise naturally out of the occasions on which they were delivered. And these were extremely various, apparently accidental, and unconnected. Its doctrines lie scattered about in a rich profusion, like the productions of nature. The

SECT. I. most unskilful hand can take from this store
to supply his wants, and learns to bless the goodness of that common parent who hath made this ample provision for all. And thus the lowest and the busiest part of mankind, they who have neither leisure nor ability to digest a whole system, may reap the greatest benefit from the scriptures, whilst they cannot look into a single page without returning the wiser from it, and without meeting with many lessons of instruction whose force they may fully comprehend. Thus much was necessary to render the scriptures fit for common use.

However, it is one argument, amongst many, of the divinity of the holy scriptures, that these seemingly unconnected parts do all yet unite in one great plan. Scattered like the stars in the firmament of heaven, like them too they are the parts of an harmonious system. The designs of the Almighty are distinguished from

from those of man, by being of an ex-^{SECT.}_{1.}tent far beyond all the powers of human execution. The work of Revelation taking its rise in the beginning of things, advanced slowly through many ages towards its accomplishment. Many were the agents commissioned by heaven to labour in the progress of this great work. And while each seemed to study only his own times, and to be intent only on the execution of his own particular part, he was working on the vast design of heaven, in concert with those who had lived many ages before him, and with those who were to arise in ages yet to come. Nothing therefore could give consistency to the labours of men thus situated in times and countries the most remote from each other, and amongst whom no human means of communication could possibly lie open, but the guiding hand of him who, "knows the end from the beginning," and before whom the secrets of all future ages are unfolded, conducting the whole, and lead-

SECT. I. ing each, unknown to himself, to fill up
his part of the immense plan. Whilst
therefore the common eye sees nothing in
the volume of Revelation, but separate
predictions, unconnected miracles, distinct
histories, undigested laws, and detached
events; the just and attentive observer
beholds an amazing chain of connection
running throughout the whole, beholds the
strongest union under an apparent disorder,
and discerns what at first sight seemed per-
plexed and void of design, to be, as was
beautifully said of the ways of providence,
“ a regular confusion.”

It must necessarily happen, that many
parts of Revelation, at the same time that
they served a more limited purpose, must
have been planned in subservience to this
great design. And therefore if we over-
look this reference, we can never be
master of their true force, nor understand
their full effect. It is the business of the
faithful teacher of God's word, to study
these

these relations, and to compare the Revelation of one age with that of another. SECT.
I.
By this means, many of those passages which are otherwise "hard to be understood," will be cleared up, many new lights will be obtained, many truths better supported, and, every part mutually sustaining each other, Revelation will stand firm and unshaken, and will appear in the beautiful image of the royal Psalmist, like "a city that is at unity in itself." And thus will the faithful minister of God's word be enabled, by the divine blessing, to lead others more steadily in their duty, and to protect from error those who do not enjoy his abilities or opportunities. He will go before them like a skilful guide, who is not barely acquainted with one single beaten path, and therefore may easily be thrown beyond his knowledge, but is master of the whole country through which he is appointed to lead them.

Thus it is, that Revelation hath, by
the

SECT. I. the wise author of it, been at once adapted to the capacities of the vulgar, and to the most improved understandings; affording, at the same time, exercise for the brightest talents, and instructions suited to the vulgar mind. Nor is it necessary that the unlearned Christian should be in possession of all those hidden stores in the system of Revelation which learning gives access to; no more than that the peasant should understand all those wonders of nature, hidden from the vulgar eye, with which every part of the world around him is enriched. Both enjoy the fruits of these wonders, without understanding the sources from whence they flow.

But whilst this admirable disposition of the whole work of Revelation gives many advantages to the sincere and able interpreter of God's word, it must necessarily lay it open to numberless misrepresentations when it comes into the hands of the

the ignorant or ill-disposed. When the ^{SECT.}
blind will undertake to lead the way, and ^{I.}
ignorance, with that confidence which is
peculiar to itself, boldly steps into the seat
of instruction, what wonder that we find
errors multiplied; passages explained, not
only without any regard to the general
design of Revelation, but even without
attending to the purpose of the writer,
or the tenour of the discourse to which
they belong; and doctrines drawn from
them, which are absolutely irreconcilable
to the attributes of God, and repugnant
to every other plain and undoubted doc-
trine of scripture? Hence the unity of the
church is violated, and all order subverted;
every contriver of new opinions, or revi-
ver of those which have been long explo-
ded, becomes the leader of a sect; and he
who can build the most mysterious doc-
trine on some obscure text, no matter how
little understood the doctrine may be, or,
as far as it can be understood, how little
consistent with every clearer part of scrip-
ture;

SECT. I. ture; he who can, by these arts, involve
the whole body of Revelation in those
clouds which dwell on some mysterious
part, is regarded as one favoured with
new lights, and whilst he labours to ren-
der every thing obscure, is held in admi-
ration, as the only clear interpreter of the
oracles of God.

Amidst all these jarring opinions, one
point only seems to remain uncontroverted,
that faith is necessary in order to salva-
tion; faith in name at least, since there
hath been much difference of opinion a-
bout the true import and extent of this
term.

Taking therefore our beginning from
that wherein all seem to agree, let us en-
quire into the nature, the origin, founda-
tion, and evidence, the tendency and o-
perations of faith.

SECTION

SECTION II.

Of the nature of faith.

LEAVING all human opinions behind SECT.
II.
us, let us have recourse to the sacred records of truth for information, and learn from the gracious mouth of our Saviour himself, what we are to think of the true NATURE of faith.

To any one who is contented to understand the gospels in their plain and natural meaning, this enquiry cannot be long nor difficult. The apostles were appointed to convert the world to the christian faith, and to convey to all mankind the glad tidings of redemption. When therefore they received their commission to execute this great work, one would expect to find some clear account of that faith, which

SECT.
II.

which they were to implant in the minds of mankind, and which was to be the foundation of the religion which they were to propagate. Accordingly the words of our Saviour's commission to them are these: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Were we possessed only of this plain account of faith, I suppose no honest and well-meaning Christian could be at a loss to understand the nature of that faith which he professes. It would then no longer be reckoned a thing which can neither be explained nor comprehended, nor would there be any room for those confused and mystic descriptions of it, which are calculated rather to perplex than to inform.

The

^a Mark xvi. 15, 16.

The apostles are here directed to preach <sup>SECT.
II.</sup> the gospel, and to him that believeth the gospel, and submits to the laws of this new institution, salvation is promised. Here all is clear and perfectly intelligible. The single act of the mind concerned in faith, as it is here described by our Saviour himself, is that of believing; and the object of faith is that Gospel, and those glad tidings of salvation which were delivered to the world by the first inspired preachers of christianity, and are now recorded in their writings.

So plain and simple is the account of faith given us by the great Author and Finisher of it: and we cannot suppose that, at a time when he delivered his last instructions to those who were to preach his gospel, he would give them a defective account of that act by which converts were to be qualified for admission into his religion. This then is to be considered as the fundamental rule of faith, to which all subsequent accounts of it are to be referred,

SECT. II. referred. And if we meet with difficulties in any part of the scripture where this subject is treated of, to this test must we bring them, and by this great original must they be cleared up; both because, in all reason, that which is obscure should be explained by that which is manifestly clear; and because the sacred writers must be supposed always to have preserved a consistency with that great commission, by virtue of which they acted.

Accordingly we shall find this rule of faith strictly adhered to, and strongly confirmed in their practice. Every new convert will be a fresh proof that our conception of faith is just, and that we have represented the instructions of our Lord in the same sense in which the apostles understood them.

The first fruits of their mission, those three thousand souls who, as an earnest of a plentiful harvest, came in at the first
won-

wonderful effusion of the Holy Ghost, are described as ^b “they that gladly received SECT.
II. “the word;” and soon after, as “they *that* ^c *believed*.”

The next history of an eminent conversion which we meet with, is that which followed upon Peter's healing the lame man, who was laid at the gate of the temple. The miracle having drawn a vast concourse of people together, Peter took the opportunity of exhorting them to embrace the christian faith. In the midst of his discourse he was seized by the magistrates, alarmed at his success; ^d “howbeit, many of them which heard the word *believed*, and the number of the men was about five thousand.”

C

Soon

^b Acts ii. 41.

^c Acts ii. 44.

^d Acts iv. 4.

SECT.
II.

Soon after, the whole body of the faithful, who had met together to thank God for the success with which he had blessed their ministry, are thus described, ^e “And the multitude of them that *believed*, were of one heart, and of one soul.”

The progress of the work of conversion is thus described, ^f “And *believers* were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both men and women.”

When Philip first “preached Christ in Samaria,” and delivered the unhappy people from the powerful delusions of the enchanter Simon, we are told, that ^g “they *believed* Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the
“ name

^e Acts iv. 32.

^f Acts v. 14.

^g Acts viii. 12.

“name of Jesus Christ,” and that “they <sup>SECT.
II.</sup> were baptized.”

^h “If thou believest with all thine heart,” said the same apostle to the treasurer of Candace Queen of the Ethiopians, “thou mayest be baptized. And he answered and said, I *believe* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

When the miracle of Peter’s raising Tabitha to life was ⁱ “known throughout all Joppa, many *believed* in the Lord.”

^k “Through his name,” says Peter in his discourse to the devout Cornelius and his gentile friends, “whosoever *believeth* in him shall receive remission of sins.”

C 2

When

^h Acts viii. 37.

ⁱ Acts ix. 42.

^k Acts x. 43.

SECT.
II.

When some of the disciples, “ which
 “ were scattered abroad upon the persecu-
 “ tion that arose about Stephen, came
 “ unto Antioch, and spoke unto the Gre-
 “ cians, preaching the Lord Jesus, ¹ the
 “ hand of the Lord was with them;
 “ and a great number *believed*, and turn-
 “ ed unto the Lord.” Thus providenti-
 ally did God turn this persecution to the
 service of his cause, and made it a means
 of spreading that religion which it aimed
 to destroy.

When Sergius Paulus the governor of
 Cyprus, a prudent man, saw clearly “ the
 “ hand of the Lord” in the punishment
 which fell upon the forcerer Elymas at
 the word of Paul, ^m “ he *believed*, be-
 “ ing astonished at the doctrine of the
 “ Lord.”

“ Be

¹ Acts xi. 21.

^m Acts xiii. 12.

“ Be it known unto you therefore, SECT.
II.
 “ men and brethren,” said St. Paul in his
 “ word of exhortation” in the synagogue
 at Antioch, “ that through this man is
 “ preached unto you the forgiveness of
 “ sins ; and by him all that *believe* are
 “ justified from all things, from which ye
 “ could not be justified by the law of
 “ Moses.”

And when afterwards, in the same city, the
 apostles, being opposed and rejected by the
 Jews, “ waxed bold,” and openly declared
 their mission to the Gentiles, and pub-
 lished the gracious purpose of heaven to
 extend “ salvation unto the ends of the
 “ earth ; ° the Gentiles were glad, and
 “ glorified the word of the Lord : and as
 “ many as were ordained to eternal life
 “ *believed*. And the word of the Lord

C 3

was

° Acts xiii. 38, 39.

° Acts xiii. 48, 49.

SECT. II. “ was published throughout all the region.”

~ This event is called by the apostles, when at their return to Antioch they gave an account of the success of their mission, ^p “ the opening of the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

When the keeper of the prison at Philippi, alarmed at midnight by the shaking of the foundations of his prison, “ called for a light, sprang in, came trembling, “ and falling down before his prisoners, “ Paul and Silas,” proposed to them that important question, “ What must I do to “ be saved? ^q *Believe* on the Lord Jesus “ Christ,” they replied, “ and thou shalt “ be saved, and thy house.”

At Thessalonica, when Paul, “ as his “ manner was, went into the synagogue, “ and

^p Acts xiv. 27.

^q Acts xvi. 31.

“ and three sabbath-days reasoned with <sup>SECT.
II.</sup>
“ the Jews out of the scriptures, ^r some
“ of them *believed*, and comforted with
“ Paul and Silas.”

At Athens, ^s “ certain men clave unto
“ him and *believed*.”

At Corinth, ^t “ Crispus, the chief ruler
“ of the synagogue, *believed* on the Lord
“ with all his house; and many of the
“ Corinthians hearing, *believed*, and were
“ baptized.”

At Rome, ^u “ some *believed* the things
“ which were spoken, and some *believed*
“ *not*.”

C 4

Thus

^r Acts xvii. 4.

^s Acts xvii. 34.

^t Acts xviii. 8.

^u Acts xxviii. 24.

SECT.
II.

Thus have we the clear testimony of our Lord himself descending down with equal clearness through his apostles, to instruct us in the nature of faith. It were easy to enlarge this account, and to strengthen it by many authorities from every book of the New Testament. But this would be repeating what must be known to every one who peruses the sacred writings ; whilst there could be little hopes of giving additional weight to the argument in the opinion of those, who can find means to elude a conclusion drawn from the uniform practice of the apostles founded on the clearest testimony of our Lord.

The act of the mind then concerned in faith is simple, but the object is complex and extensive. The object of faith includes a great variety of matter, through which there runs one grand division that we must carefully attend to. It contains an history and a revelation ; an history of the whole progress of redemption from the first unfolding

ing

ing of the design soon after the fall, till its completion in the death and resurrection of our Lord: and a revelation of whatever belongs to a future state, to heaven, and to eternity. When faith looks back on all that our blessed Saviour hath done and suffered for us, it is closely connected with gratitude and love; when it looks forward to all those scenes of bliss and glory that are in reserve for us, it is then more immediately united with trust and hope.

SECT.
II.
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Faith we find appeared very early in the world, for Abel was possessed of this virtue, and by faith ^w “offered unto God “a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” But the object of faith was at that time extremely different from that which is now presented to us. Creation was then almost the only great act of mercy that faith could

^w Heb. xi. 4.

SECT.
II.

could look back upon: for * “ through
“ faith we understand that the worlds
“ were framed by the word of God.”
The historical object of faith therefore was
at first small; but as acts of divine mercy
were multiplied, and the records of them
enlarged, this part of the object encreased.
And as it encreased, we find the
promises of God, which were at first revealed
in general terms, growing at the same time
more distinct and explicit. The horizon,
which bounds the view, enlarges as we
advance forward in the history of revelation,
so that each succeeding patriarch or prophet
had a fuller prospect both of the blessings
and the promises of God, than those that
went before him. The history of past, and
the promises of future mercies, were still
encreasing together, till at length to us
who have the happiness of seeing the work
of redemption accomplished,

* Heb. xi. 3.

plished, and whatever concerns our eternal state placed in the clearest light, the object of faith is completely revealed, and appears before us in its full magnitude.

SECT.
II.

Faith then, in the early ages of the world, could have been little more than a belief and trust in the general promises of God. This agrees extremely well with that beautiful history of pristine faith, which we have in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. "These all
" died in faith, not having received the
" promises, but having seen them afar off,
" and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they
" were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

How thankful then ought we to be for those superior lights with which we are blessed; for that complete revelation, and
that

SECT.
II.
~

that finished history of redeeming love which we enjoy! And if the holy men who lived in that dawn of revelation, could chearfully sustain every difficulty by which their faith was tried, and could give such heroic proofs of their trust and dependance on God, how great must be the reproach to us if the Sun of Righteousness shining upon us cannot warm our cold affections into some suitable expressions of gratitude and duty.

SECTION

SECTION III.

Of the various kinds into which faith hath been commonly distinguished.

THE distinction which hath been re-
marked in the object of faith, as look-
ing back on the past, or forward on the pro-
mised mercies of God, and thus connected
on one hand with love, on the other with
trust, cannot escape us in reading the
holy scriptures. Where ancient times are
spoken of, we generally find the latter i-
dea prevail. In the times of the gospel,
we sometimes distinguish the one, and
sometimes the other, and frequently faith
is spoken of in its full extent, as com-
prehending both.

The reflex act of faith, or that which
looks back on God's gracious dealings
with mankind already past, is the first in
order :

SECT.
III.

SECT.
III.

order: it is that which first arises in the mind, and by which the other is introduced. It is the belief of God's mercies past, that can alone give any solid hopes, any well-grounded belief of mercies to come. This is the basis, and indeed the evidence, on which is built all our trust in the promises of God, all our hopes in futurity. And thus it is, that faith, which is in one light, as it looks forward towards future happiness, "the *substance* of things hoped for;" is in another, as it rests on the foundation of former mercies, "the *evidence* of things not seen."

This distinction, important as it is, doth not however affect the nature of faith. Its essence, as seated in the mind, is still the same; it is still a belief in the mercies of God, whether it may dwell on the records of his providence, and the history of redemption, or look forward

into

into the boundless prospect of eternity. Just SECT.
III.
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as vision is the same however its object  
may be changed, whether the eye is cast  
downwards on the earth, or is lifted up  
to heaven.

This seems to be the only distinction  
that is well founded in scripture, or is  
of any consequence in the study of our  
religion. It hath been usual however to  
multiply distinctions, and men who can  
be satisfied with nothing that is plain and  
simple, fond of knowledge ostentatious  
rather than useful, would think you know  
little of your religion, if you do not speak  
familiarily of several different kinds of faith.  
For, besides the true living faith, we are  
told that there is a *temporary* faith, an  
*historical* faith, a *speculative* faith, and a  
*faith of miracles*. But all these distinc-  
tions, it is apprehended, are of no use to  
the plain and honest believer, and will

appear

SECT.  
III.

appear upon enquiry, to be without any  
just foundation in scripture.

The notion of a temporary faith, as a distinct kind of faith, is taken from our Saviour's parable of the sower. He here represents, and beautifully illustrates, the reception which the gospel would meet with amongst different hearers, by seed sown in different soils. In the first instance, "the seed fell by the way side," upon a soil that might have been naturally good, but was now trodden down, and become so firm and hard, that the seed could not enter into it. This represents a mind, so hardened in impiety, that the word can make no impression upon it. The word is never received into the mind, and therefore, in this instance, there is in reality no faith.

In the two following instances, the seed is received, Faith is here produced, but from various causes it is prevented from  
working

working its proper effect. Not because <sup>SECT.  
III.</sup> the faith itself was of a wrong kind, and tares had been sown instead of wheat. The seed was right and found, as appears by its timely vegetation. The word was properly received, and entertained at first even with joy, but then it wanted a due supply of nourishment. In the stony ground the surface was good, but there was no depth of earth. The plant grew and flourished in temperate seasons but there wanted a depth and strength of soil; there wanted that deep attention, and serious application of mind, which alone could fix the root of faith in the heart, and enable it to stand firm in adverse times, and to endure the storms of persecution. In the thorny ground there was no want of nourishment sufficient to have fed the plant, but it was all drawn off in supplying useless weeds. The mind was not averse to all the serious attention and close application of  
D thought



SECT.  
III.

thought that could be required, but that attention which should have been given to religion, was all exhausted on the thorny cares, or the luxuriant pleasures of life.

It was not therefore from any defect in the kind of faith, that it became fruitless, and died away before it attained to perfection, in either of these instances; but because it wanted that nourishment and due cultivation which it finds in the "honest and good heart," and which alone can enable it to bring forth fruit, thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold.

We are next to consider the case of an historical faith, or a faith which believes indeed the account of redemption, but at the same time looks upon it with cold indifference as an uninteresting story. But can we suppose such a case, the case of a man, who believes an history in which  
his

his own highest interests are closely in-  
terwoven, and yet believes himself unin-  
terested in it? The supposition is mani-  
festly inconsistent in itself. A man's pas-  
sions or prejudices may keep him from  
attending to the gospel, or prevent the  
news of salvation from making any im-  
pression upon his mind, but if he once  
believes its interesting truths, he cannot  
believe them with indifference.

SECT.  
III.

We naturally take such a share even  
in the interests of others, that we can-  
not attend to an history of the remotest  
events with absolute indifference. The  
annals of ages long since past awaken all  
our passions. Whilst we listen to the  
well told story of virtue in distress, the  
tear of pity steals down our cheek. If  
we read of the hero who bravely rescued  
a people from the oppression of a tyrant,  
or saved even private innocence from ruin,

SECT.  
III.

we feel our bosom beat with the approbation of the generous deed.

The truth is, that every history must in some degree move us, as it is more or less interesting. We cannot separate between the belief of the history, and the affections that it will naturally excite in us. Is it possible then to conceive a man believing the history of himself and of all the world being saved from endless ruin, and believing it with absolute indifference? It cannot be. The true faith and the historical must coincide, where the history is, the history of redemption.

The speculative faith is nearly allied to the historical. This is considered as opposed to a true practical faith. It must be allowed indeed that faith conceived in the mind, and living in contemplation only, is not so valuable as faith brought forth into act, and directing and influencing



influencing life and manners. But still <sup>SECT.  
III.</sup> faith and practice are in themselves distinct from each other; and when we enquire into the nature of faith, it must be considered in itself, and as it exists in the mind only. And in its own proper and inherent nature it is the same, whether it be yet made perfect by works or not. As the nature and powers of every cause are independent of its effect; or as a mechanical rule is the same in the conception of the artist, and in the execution of the mechanic. If this be not admitted, and if all faith must be condemned as false and spurious under the name of speculative, because it hath not yet been carried into act. I beg it may be considered, how far this decision will carry us. All faith, even the purest and best, must be conceived in the heart before it can operate on the actions; and there was a time when the faith of the most exemplary men, even of the apos-

SECT. III. tles themselves, was in this sense speculative.

I am well aware, that a speculative faith is frequently taken in a very different sense, as a belief like that of the most abstracted theorem, confined merely to speculation, and which hath in itself no relation or tendency to practice. But when we consider what hath been said under the foregoing article, I think there will be reason to call in question the very existence of this kind of faith. There can be no real belief of the great doctrines of christianity without some motions of the will to goodness. It is this which makes the case of the wicked christian so extremely unpardonable. He overrules and stifles these good motions, and by violence suppresses those convictions and reproaches of conscience which he cannot but feel. They who suppose that a man may indeed believe the gospel without

without feeling any impulse to goodness, <sup>SECT. III.</sup> surely do not well consider what the doctrines of the gospel are. A sinner can never go on at ease in a course of vicious indulgence, who believes that "doubtless there is a God who judgeth the earth," and that he must, after this life, render a strict account of all his actions. He cannot look on the prospect of eternal bliss, without some secret "longings after immortality;" nor on scenes of endless misery, without "shrinking back from destruction." But in spite of every impulse to goodness, he persists in wickedness. And it is this which will make it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for those who persist in a course of unrepented sin under the light of the gospel.

But "the devils also believe, and tremble." True. Saint James, to shew the absurdity of supposing that the design of



SECT.  
III.

christianity terminates in faith, reminds the abettors of that most dangerous tenet, that the devils themselves are almost as much christians as they are. But we must remark an essential difference between the case of evil spirits and that of men. They may indeed believe the truth of the gospel, but the gospel is no gospel, no tidings of joy to them. They know that the son of God, who comes to offer salvation to mankind, comes "to bruise the serpent's head." A belief of this must necessarily add to their horror and despair. But when man believes the gospel, he believes that to him is this word of salvation sent; he sees the son of God as *his* Redeemer and *his* Saviour; a belief of a very different kind, and which must be attended with very different emotions. In a word, that there may be a belief of the gospel, which is never "made perfect" by suitable works, fatal  
expe-

experience but too strongly compels us to admit: but the honour of our holy religion obliges us to maintain, that there can be no real belief of the truth of the gospel without a tendency to produce goodness.

SECT.  
III.

The \* faith of miracles alone remains to be considered. This is of two kinds, the passive, and the active. That is called the passive faith of miracles, which was generally required as a qualification for receiving the benefit of a miraculous cure. The nature of this faith will be clear

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\* An effectual faith of miracles it is supposed we do not at this time aspire after, or expect to be blessed with. And therefore should it really be proved to have been a distinct species of faith, it cannot be brought as an exception to that idea of faith which hath been before established. But even here we shall find the general character of faith which hath been deduced from our Saviour's words, and the practice of his apostles, clearly preserved.

SECT. clear from two or three remarkable in-  
III.  
stances.

What then was that faith of the Centurion, which our Lord himself admired, and which he honoured with this high encomium, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel? Lord I am not worthy," thus did this Roman express himself, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." Thy personal attendance cannot be necessary to this miracle. Even my commands are executed at a distance by these soldiers, who are under my authority. But all nature is more obedient to thy will, than these soldiers are to mine: therefore "speak the word only;" obedient nature will execute the rest, "and my servant shall be healed." Our Lord was struck with these exalted conceptions of the power by which he acted; and in answer to this sublime expression of faith, he replied,  
"Go



"<sup>a</sup> Go thy way, and as thou hast *be-* SECT.  
*lieved*, so be it done unto thee." III.

"<sup>b</sup> *Believe* ye that I am able to do  
 "this?" said our Saviour to the blind  
 men. "They said unto him, Yea, Lord.  
 "Then touched he their eyes, saying,  
 "according to your faith be it unto you."  
 Their addressing him by the title of "Son  
 "of David," may be considered as an  
 acknowledgment that they believed him  
 to be the Messiah, since that was one of  
 his prophetic characters.

Jesus thus described the power of this  
 kind of faith to the man who brought  
 his son to be healed of a dumb spirit.  
 "<sup>c</sup> If thou canst *believe*, all things are  
 "possible to him that *believeth*. And  
 straight-

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<sup>b</sup> Matth. ix. 28.

<sup>c</sup> Mark ix. 23, 24.

<sup>a</sup> Matth. viii. 13.

SECT. III. “ straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine *unbelief*.”

“ <sup>d</sup> Fear not,” said Jesus to the ruler of the synagogue, “ *believe* only, and thy daughter shall be made whole.”

When Jesus was preparing Martha for the resurrection of her brother, “ <sup>e</sup> He said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that *believeth* in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and *believeth* in me, shall never die. *Believest* thou this? She said unto him, Yea, Lord, I *believe* that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” And afterwards “ Jesus said unto her,  
“ Said

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<sup>d</sup> Luke viii. 50.

<sup>e</sup> John xi. 25.

“ Said I not unto thee, that if thou <sup>SECT. III.</sup>  
“ wouldest *believe*, thou shouldest see the   
“ glory of God?”

In all these instances the general character of faith is clearly preserved. In the last there is a full and explicit confession of one of the noblest articles of our faith, and indeed expressly of the fundamental article of all christian faith. “ I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” In the other instances the act of faith is still the same; it is still a belief; differing only in the extent of the object. Martha was honoured with the peculiar confidence of our Lord, and therefore she had a clearer and fuller revelation of his will than others at that time enjoyed. They all expressed a firm belief of our Lord’s supreme power over nature, and therefore of his divine mission. The great object of faith was not yet distinctly

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SECT. ly revealed to them: but they believed  
III. as much of it as was revealed. Their  
faith was like that of the patriarchs, a belief, connected with a trust, in the power and promises of God.

I may be permitted to add, that as these miraculous cures wrought on the body were preparatory to that salvation which was to be dispensed to the soul, so they seem to present us with an emblem of it in some very striking particulars.—The person to be healed is sensible of his own diseased state, and of his utter inability to relieve himself.—He flies to our Redeemer for help, and trusts entirely in his power to save.—Though there are many expressions which seem to ascribe the miracle to the virtue of faith, yet it is certain, that it was performed solely by the power and mercy of our Lord—Those expressions therefore, so frequently used on these occasions, “Thy faith hath saved

“ ved thee, thy faith hath made thee <sup>SECT.  
III.</sup>  
“ whole,” in consonance with many declarations of the like import used in speaking directly of salvation, cannot be understood to mean that faith was itself the operating and efficient cause in the miracle, but only that it was a necessary condition of receiving the blessing.

Our Saviour himself clearly points out the transition from that “ virtue which “ went out of him” to relieve the body, to that healing virtue which he dispenses to the soul, by expressly joining on some occasions “ remission of sins” with the bodily cure. “ ‘ Son,” saith he to the sick of the palsy, “ be of good cheer ; thy sins be “ forgiven thee.” And in answer to the injurious construction which the Scribes put upon this declaration, “ Whether,” continued

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<sup>1</sup> Matth. ix. 2.

SECT.  
III.

tinued he, “ is it easier to say, thy sins be  
“ forgiven thee ; or to say, arise, and walk ?  
“ But, that ye may know that the Son of  
“ Man hath power on earth to forgive sins ;  
“ then saith he,” addressing himself “ to  
“ the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy  
“ bed, and go unto thine house :” clearly  
informing us, that his chief design in these  
miraculous cures wrought on the body,  
was to prove to us his power of giving sal-  
vation to the soul.

This remark will lead us to understand  
our Saviour’s conduct on another occasion.  
The evangelist informs us, that “ <sup>8</sup> he did  
“ not many mighty miracles amongst his  
“ own countrymen, because of their un-  
“ belief.” Not that his divine power was  
exhausted or diminished, or its efficacy de-  
pendant on man, or restrained by any act  
of

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<sup>8</sup> Matth. xiii. 58.



of his ; but that our Saviour chose to exert it there only where it could be subservient to the purposes of religion. We have reason to believe, from the many instances of that kind expressly mentioned, that he rarely performed these miraculous cures, but where he foresaw that the miracle would have an extensive and happy effect upon the mind. He expressly requires an open acknowledgment of their faith from many of those, on whom, or at whose request, the miracle was wrought ; and probably had always a regard to the disposition of those who were spectators of it. Thus did that divine goodness which directed all his actions to the greatest happiness of man, make one great act of mercy introductive to a greater. And therefore, in the case which we are now considering, where there was no proper disposition to improve the blessing, where it would have answered no moral purpose, and where the whole effect would have been the re-

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SECT.  
III.

removal of bodily pain, the evangelist informs us, that he with-held his mighty works.

We may now pass on to consider that which is called the active faith of miracles. By which is meant that faith which was required as a condition of receiving the power of working miracles. Faith, even here, was not itself that active power which wrought the miracle, but only, as in the former case, a condition or qualification of receiving it. Of this we have a clear proof in the case of the apostles themselves. That their faith was firmly established after they had been witnesses of our Lord's resurrection and ascension, cannot be doubted. But it was not till the feast of Pentecost that they were endued with "power from on high," by which they were enabled to work miracles.

To discover the nature of this faith, we need only have recourse to that promise of our lord to his disciples by which he annexes



nexes to faith this power of working mira-  
cles. For all these powers, said he, shall  
be conferred on, or shall follow, "h them  
"that *believe*." From which it is clear,  
that even this faith, which at first sight may  
seem to be of a distinct and peculiar na-  
ture, is in reality no more than the com-  
mon faith of christians: it is no other than  
a belief in our Redeemer, to which he was  
pleased for the establishment of his religion  
to annex at one time the blessing of bodily  
cures; at another, the power of working  
miracles.

SECT.  
III.

The result of all is, that the act of the  
mind in faith is invariable, though the object  
hath undergone many changes. At first it  
was no more than a promise of Redemption  
conceived in general terms. The object  
however was gradually enlarged, and as it

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was

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Mark xvi 17.



SECT.  
III.

was enlarged, became clearer and more distinct, till all the promises that belong to this world, received their accomplishment in our Saviour; and all those which belong to a future state, were placed by him in the strongest light.

We may therefore lay aside all other distinctions, as of no importance to unlearned christians at least, as tending only to encumber and embarrass their minds, and to open the way to a train of needless difficulties, and groundless suspicions. They need be under no anxiety about the kind of their faith, if they are only secure as to the sincerity of it.

Content then to follow the simplicity of the gospel, let us conclude, that there is in reality but one kind of faith: faith being every where a belief of redemption, and of all the blessings and promises that belong to it, as far as they are revealed. To us there-  
fore

fore, who have the happiness to see revelation finished and compleated in the gospel, and all saving truths there summed up and centered, faith may be defined, A BELIEF OF THE GOSPEL.

SECT.  
III.

This simple idea will be found to answer every purpose, and to be the basis of every character ascribed to faith in the holy scriptures. And were we to pursue our subject through all those paths in which revelation would lead us, we should see how all the inspired writers correspond in this great point, as in every other; how all that they affirm of faith, arises from this fundamental idea; and how, like a central light, it discovers to us the symmetry of the whole christian system, and clears up the difficulties which must ever be inexplicable to such as attach themselves to some inferior part only, regardless of what is principal or dependent in the system, and losing sight of that grand order and connection which run



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III.

through all the works of the Almighty. We should see the true origin of faith, how it arises, and how the divine flame is first kindled in the soul. We should see the tendency and the operations of faith, the glorious change that it works in the breast where it is received and cherished, how it gives new life to the soul that was before dead to all sense of goodness, how wonderfully it reinforces the cause of virtue within us, and lifts the heart from earth to heaven.

At present it must suffice to have obtained a clear conception of the nature of faith, and to have taken a distinct view of our Lords own account of it. A subject which could never be deemed unseasonable, but which seems to have a peculiar claim to our attention at this time, when so many unhappy divisions are multiplying amongst us, most of which seem to have been formed, and still to be supported upon the confused and mistaken representations which have been made of faith.

For



For some join with faith in its very nature and first conception, a strong confidence of salvation, without any condition, and without reserve; and consequently leave very little room for any anxiety about improvement in virtue, which must rather indeed seem superfluous where the great end of all virtue is supposed to be already attained by a prompt and hardy assurance that we shall be saved.

SECT.  
III.

Others give such accounts of faith, as, far from conveying any distinct notion of what they undertake to describe, must leave their followers lost and bewildered, totally devoid of all clear apprehensions in themselves, and therefore in a fit disposition to follow wherever their leaders think fit to conduct them. One of these descriptions is so very extraordinary, that I cannot forbear laying it before my readers.

“Faith,” says this writer, “is not any single

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“habit

SECT.  
III.

“habit or act of the soul, nor ought it to  
 “be restrained to one faculty thereof only ;  
 “but it is something made up of various  
 “acts, which, though not in a confused  
 “manner, may interfere one with the other,  
 “and in a kind of delightful fellowship and  
 “union, promote and help each other, and  
 “this constantly. It imports a change of  
 “the whole man, is the spring of the whole  
 “spiritual life ; and lastly, it denotes an  
 “holy diligence and energy of the whole  
 “soul towards God in Christ, so that its  
 “full compass can scarcely be comprehend-  
 “ed in a distinct manner under any one  
 “single idea\*.”

This is called, “a plain and simple, a  
 “truly scriptural account of faith.” But  
 how different is this from the clear language  
 of Him who is the true light, and who  
 came

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\* See a treatise on Faith extracted and translated from  
 WITSIUS by the reverend Mr MADAN.



came to lighten every man that cometh in-  
to the world ! Surely, we may say of men  
who speak this language, as the apostle did  
of some teachers of new opinions in his days,  
that whilst they desire to be teachers of the  
law, they yet understand neither what they  
say, nor whereof they affirm.

SECT.  
III.

Amidst the concern, which the prospect  
of these encreasing distractions in our church  
must occasion, where shall the true friend  
of religion turn his eyes for consolation ?  
Where, next under heaven, but to those an-  
cient seats of learning, in which truth hath  
long taken up her favourite residence ?  
When errors and corruption in doctrine and  
practice begin to spread their contagion,  
here will religion expect to find her pure  
doctrines taught, and her genuine princi-  
ples laid deep in the minds of those who are  
trained up for her service. And hence will  
she hope to lead them forth warmed with  
the instructions which they have received,  
and



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III.

and the examples they have beheld, to diffuse that knowledge which they have here imbibed, and thus to remove the growing delusion.

To prepare them for this important service, we must begin by endeavouring to possess them with just and clear conceptions of that faith which they are to defend, that faith which is the life and soul of our whole religion, and without which it can neither be understood, nor taught, nor practised as it ought to be. And to engage us in these labours, we who are devoted to the study of all true and valuable knowledge, have many motives peculiar to ourselves.

Were it the cause of abstracted truth alone, that were sufficient to render it interesting here. We would be thought to reason justly, and to think with propriety in matters of science alone; and to have clear and distinct ideas of all those objects which  
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are seen by the fainter light of reason only. SECT.  
III.  
What then must be our reproach, if, through our inattention, we suffer perplexity and confusion to remain around those great objects upon which all the brightness of revelation shines! Even philosophy calls for our diligence here, if christianity did not. And ill should we acquit ourselves towards our Creator who hath given us reason and abilities, and towards his good providence, who, by the hands of our founders and benefactors, hath blessed us with the means of improving them, if whilst we exert them in cultivating every branch of amusing or instructive science, we should neglect in the mean time to exercise them on the noblest of all objects; on that wherein our own happiness, the honour of God, and the good of mankind are all equally concerned.

May we ever keep this object in our view! and when our holy religion shall be in danger of being obscured by ignorance,  
super-

SECT.  
III.  
~ superstition, or enthusiasm, may the true light of the gospel be preserved here; and shining forth from hence may the gathering clouds of error and delusion be dispersed before it, and the sacred, saving truths of revelation again break forth in all their brightness, and be confessed every where in their native purity!

SECTION



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SECTION IV.

*Of the origin of faith.*

**I**F we would understand the true ORIGIN SECT.  
IV.  
OF FAITH, we must have recourse to  
the great Author and Finisher of it.

By what means then did our Saviour, by what means did his Apostles, originally implant faith in the minds of the first converts? Did they implant it? or, did they leave it to be produced entirely by the inward operation of the Holy Spirit?

These are enquiries which the gospel alone can answer.

When the Jews demanded from our Lord an open and explicit declaration, whether  
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IV.

he was the Messiah, or not, he replied only by an appeal to those works which he did in his Father's name. These works, he said, spake for him, and would decide this matter more clearly than any words of his own could do. "Jesus walked in the temple, " in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews " round about him, and said unto him, " How long dost thou make us to doubt? " If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Je- " sus answered them, I told you, and ye " believed not. The works that I do in " my Father's name, they bear witness of " me." And afterwards he adds, " If I " do not the works of my Father, believe " me not. But if I do, though ye believe " not me, believe the works<sup>a</sup>."

In this passage our Lord clearly makes faith dependent on the testimony of his miracles.

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<sup>a</sup> John x. 22. &c.

acles. "If he did the works of his Father, SECT.  
IV.  
"he tells the Jews, that they ought to believe those works." On no other supposition doth he require their belief in him. "If he did not the works of his Father, he leaves them at full liberty to reject his claim, and to withdraw their belief;" contented that their faith should stand or fall, as it should appear to be supported by this kind of evidence, or to want that support.

It is not on this occasion alone that our Saviour lays this ground of faith: we find it every where resting on the same foundation. His addreses to the understanding, his application of argument and reasoning, his appeals to external evidence, abound in all his discourses, and meet us in every part of his history. The instances of this kind are too numerous to be fully recited, much less to be insisted and enlarged upon as their importance deserves. I shall content myself



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self therefore with laying before my readers a recapitulation of what hath been extracted from the evangelical writings to our purpose; and shall give them in general, the result of a careful and attentive perusal of the gospels, and the history of the apostolical labours. This I shall do in the first place; and then shall add such reflections, as I hope may throw some light upon this important subject.

In the first place then, we are expressly told, that the design of our Lord's forerunner was "to prepare the way of the Lord;" to dispose the hearts of men for that purer dispensation which was now to take place, and to turn their attention towards that great personage who was about to arise. "b He came for a witness, to *bear witness* of the light, that all men through him might believe." By his attestation, and
by

by the many extraordinary circumstances in his birth and ministry, he introduced and opened the evidence for the divine mission of our Lord.

SECT.
IV.

The peculiar force of John's testimony lay in its being prophetical. Every common beholder could own our Lord to be the Messiah, after they had seen his miracles. But John bare witness to him before he had given any proofs of a divine power. It was his part to close the prophetical evidence of our Lord's divine mission. "He was a Prophet:" but he was at the same time "more than a Prophet." For it was his great office to introduce that new dispensation which the other Prophets had only foretold. This peculiar situation gave occasion to a remarkable difference in the manner of confirming their testimony. All the antient Prophets were at a great distance from the grand object which they foretold. Hence it was necessary that they should be

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enabled

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IV.

enabled to confirm their prophecies, and to procure them credit amongst their contemporaries, by miracles, or by some collateral prophecy which received a speedy accomplishment. But the language of the Baptist was, "Behold the Lamb of God!" "There standeth one among you who is greater than I." John therefore, as we read, "did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man, were true." His testimony to the character of our Lord was verified by the event; and his predictions were supported, not by any miracles of his own, but by the personal appearance, and the miracles of our Lord himself*.

But

* What hath been here observed concerning the nature of the Baptist's testimony, will lead us to understand the design and the propriety of that message which he sent to our Lord by his disciples. Having finished the business of his own mission, in order to instruct his disciples that they were now to seek from the Lamb of God himself, the accomplishment of that testimony which he had borne of him,

But let us pass on to consider our Lord's ^{SECT. IV.} conduct and personal declarations on this subject.

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him, he sent two of them to our Lord, to enquire whether he claimed the character of the promised Messiah or not, and what proof he could give of his title to it. In answer to which our Lord said unto them, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." This answer is a clear reference to a signal * prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah: and therefore it is manifest that he referred the enquirers for their conviction at once to the evidence of prophecies and miracles. The finger of God is manifest in this whole occurrence. It could not be by chance that John sent his disciples to propose this important question to our Lord at the very time when he was enabled to give the fullest satisfaction to it, and to confirm in so remarkable a manner the testimony of the Baptist. It could not be by chance that the enquiry after his divine character was made at that critical period when he was displaying

* Isaiah lxi. See also Luke iv. 18.

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IV.

The Evangelist does not neglect the very first occasion of teaching us the true design, and

playing the strongest marks of it; in that "same hour" when he was engaged in "curing many of their infirmities" "and plagues, and of evil spirits, and in giving sight to" "many that were born blind."

We see clearly then the propriety of this enquiry, without deducing it from any supposed doubts or discontent in the mind of the Baptist himself, or even any incredulity in his disciples. John had frequently declared our Lord to be the Messiah, which was indeed the grand purpose of his own mission. But without his doubting, or his disciples disbelieving, this testimony, they must all alike have been sensible, that this testimony could have no force till it should be confirmed by the event; and till our Lord should prove himself to be what John had asserted him to be. The prophets had described the Messiah. John had pointed out our Saviour to the world as the person by them described. His testimony, therefore, must have been overthrown, had it not afterwards appeared, that "all things" "that John spake of this man were true." Hence it was natural, nay, it was necessary, that he should send his disciples to our Lord, that they might see the prophetic descriptions of the Messiah, and the testimony of their master, verified

and telling us the genuine effect of our ^{SECT. IV.} Lord's miracles. On the "beginning of
"miracles" which Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, he remarks, that he thereby "c mani-
F 3 " fested

verified in him. And when now the business of his own mission was accomplished; when his doctrine and his testimony of our Lord's divine character had made their due impression upon the people; when the report of the "mighty works of Christ" had reached him "in prison," and he perceived that our Saviour began to display that divine power which the prophets had ascribed to the Messiah, he then saw that this was the season pointed out to him by Providence, for sending his disciples to make this enquiry.

I gladly embrace this opportunity of acknowledging the pleasure I have received from the perusal of "An enquiry into the Divine Missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ," by the ingenious Mr. BELL, and of referring my readers to it: where they will find the argument for the truth of Christianity arising from the several extraordinary circumstances in the birth and ministry of the Baptist, as they stand connected with the history of our Lord, drawn out with a masterly hand.

c John ii. 11.

SECT. IV. " fested forth his glory, and his disciples
 " believed on him.

Our Saviour reproaches, in the severest terms, those cities, which had been witnesses of his mighty works without being converted by them. " ^d Wo unto thee, Chorazin: wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you they had a great while ago repented; sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you."

His displeasure against those who had resisted the clearest evidence, is expressed in terms the strongest and most awakening that can be imagined. " ^e Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall

^d Matth xi. 21.

^e Matth xii. 31.

“ shall be forgiven unto man, but the blas-
“ phemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be
“ forgiven unto man.”

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IV.

Our Lord appeals to the prophetic evidence of the antient scriptures for the conviction of the Jews. “^f Search the scriptures, says he, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

Often does he press upon them the evidence arising from his miraculous works in proof of his divine mission, as of irresistible force. “^g If I do not the works of my Father believe me not. But if I do, though

F 4

“ ye

^f John v. 39 and 46.

^g John x. 37, 38.

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IV.

“ ye believe not me, believe the works.
 “ ^h Believe me that I am in the Father, and
 “ the Father in me: or else believe me for
 “ the very works sake. “ ⁱ If I had not done
 “ among them the works which none other
 “ man did, they had not had sin. ^k I have
 “ greater witness than that of John: for the
 “ works which the Father hath given me to
 “ finish, the same works that I do, bear
 “ witness of me, that my Father hath sent
 “ me.”

The sense which the people had of this evidence, appears in many instances.

“ ¹ When he was in Jerusalem at the pas-
 “ sover, in the feast-day, many believed in
 “ his name, when they saw the miracles
 “ which he did.” “ Rabbi,”

^h John xiv. 11.

ⁱ John xv. 24.

^k John v. 36.

John ii. 23.

“^m Rabbi,” said Nicodemus, “ we know SECT.
IV.
“ that thou art a teacher come from God :
“ for no man can do these miracles that
“ thou doest, except God be with him.”

“ⁿ Come,” said the woman of Samaria,
“ come, see a man which told me all the
“ things that ever I did: is not this the
“ Christ? And many of the Samaritans of
“ that city believed on him, for the saying
“ of the woman.—And many more belie-
“ ved because of his own word; and said
“ unto the woman, Now we believe, not
“ because of thy saying: for we have heard
“ him ourselves, and know that this is in-
“ deed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

After the miracle of feeding the multitude
with five barley-loaves and two small fishes,
we

^m John iii. 2.

ⁿ John iii. 41, &c.

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we are told, “^o Then those men, when they
“ had seen the miracle which Jesus did,
“ said, This is of a truth that prophet that
“ should come into the world.” And on a-
nother occasion, “^p Many of the people be-
“ lieved on him, and said, When Christ
“ cometh will he do greater miracles than
“ those which this man hath done?”

The reasoning of the man born blind is
equally just and spirited. “^q Herein,” said
he to the Pharisees, “ is a marvellous thing,
“ that ye know not whence he is, and yet
“ he hath opened mine eyes. Now we
“ know that God heareth not finners: but
“ if any man be a worshipper of God, and
“ doeth his will, him he heareth. Since
“ the world began was it not heard, that
“ any man opened the eyes of one that was
“ born

^o John vi. 14.

^p John vii. 31.

^q John ix. 30, &c.

“ born blind. If this man were not of God, <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup>
“ he could do nothing*.”

Upon

* The introduction to this miracle is attended with some difficulty. “ The disciples asked him, saying, Master, “ who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born “ blind?” This question hath been generally supposed to imply a prepossession in favour of the doctrine of a pre-existent state of souls. But it does not seem likely, that the apostles should introduce a doctrine, of which there are no traces either in the Old or New Testament; still less likely, that our Lord should pass so singular a doctrine, without any direct answer, or refutation.

There is another opinion with which the later Jews were deeply infected, and which may have left some scruples in the minds of the apostles. I mean the opinion which the Jews entertained under their captivity, and in the calamitous times that followed, that all their sufferings descended upon them from the crimes of their fathers, and were wholly unmerited on their own part. This opinion it was that drew from the pen of Ezekiel that severe remonstrance and animated vindication of the ways of providence, contained in the eighteenth chapter of his prophecy. Some remains of this
opinion

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IV.

Upon more occasions than one does our Lord openly avow the design of his miracles, at the very time of working them. As in the great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead^r, he declared to his disciples, that the
 sickness

opinion may still have possessed the minds of the apostles, full as they were at that time of all Jewish prejudices. They fancied they saw in the man born blind a case that could not be accounted for but by supposing him to suffer for a parent's guilt. "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that was born blind?" The question they thought admitted but of one reply. "The crime must precede the punishment. The punishment in this case commences before there could be any personal guilt in the sufferer. It must therefore descend from the parent's sin." But our Lord shewed them, that the case admitted of a very different solution. Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." "Suffering is not in this instance the effect of sin. This is a peculiar case; an exception from the ordinary course of God's providence. This private calamity is permitted for a public good; to give me an opportunity of displaying to the world that divine power by which I act."

John xi.

sickness and death of Lazarus were only per-
mitted by heaven for the sake of that glorious
proof of divine power that he was about
to give. "This sickness," said he, "is not
unto death, but for the glory of God,
that the Son of God might be glorified
thereby." And again, "I am glad, for
your sakes, that I was not there, to the
intent ye may believe." Nay, to remove
all doubt, as to the intention of the miracle,
immediately before the powerful word was
pronounced, which the dead man heard in
his tomb and came forth, he declared before
all the people, "Because of the people which
stand by I said it, that they may believe
that thou hast sent me." The effect was
answerable, "for many of the Jews which
came to Mary, and had seen the things
which Jesus did, believed on him." Nay,
the Jewish council themselves, blinded as
they were, could not help seeing the natural
consequence of miracles like these, and were
greatly alarmed. "What do we," said they
in

SECT.
IV.

SECT. in deep deliberation amongst themselves,
 IV. “ for this man doeth many miracles. If we
 “ let him thus alone, all men will believe on
 “ him.” And again, “ The chief priests
 “ consulted that they might put Lazarus al-
 “ so to death, because that by reason of him,
 “ many of the Jews went away, and belie-
 “ ved on Jesus.”

To carry on the same design it was that
 our Lord appointed his Apostles. “ ^s And
 “ ye also shall *bear witness*,” said he, “ be-
 “ cause ye have been with me from the be-
 “ ginning.” His parting words, just before
 his ascension, again reminded them of this
 end of their institution. “ ^t Ye shall be
 “ witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem,
 “ and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and un-
 “ to the uttermost part of the earth.” And
 thus

^s John xv. 27.

^t Acts i. 1.

thus from heaven he declares his commission SECT.
IV.
to Saint Paul; “^u I have appeared unto thee
“ for this purpose, to make thee a minister
“ and a witness both of those things which
“ thou hast seen, and of those things in the
“ which I will appear unto thee.”

The apostles upon all occasions claim to themselves the character of witnesses. Matthias was chosen into the number of the apostles, that he might be “^w a witness with
“ them” of the resurrection of Jesus. This was their declaration before the council of the Jews; “^x We are his witnesses of these
“ things; and so is also the Holy Ghost,
“ whom God hath given to them that obey
“ him.”

When Peter unfolds the gospel to Cornelius.

^u Acts xxvi. 16.

^w Acts i. 22.

^x Acts v. 32.

SECT. IV. lius, he tells him, “^y We are witnesses of
 “ all things which he did both in the land
 “ of the Jews, and in Jerusalem.” And
 then he continues; “ Him God raised up
 “ the third day, and shewed him openly,
 “ not to all the people, but unto witnesses
 “ chosen before of God, even to us.” To the
 same purpose Paul speaks in the synagogue
 at Antioch. “^z He was seen many days of
 “ them which came up with him from Ga-
 “ lilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses
 “ unto the people.” And of himself he says,
 “^a Having therefore obtained help of God,
 “ I continue unto this day witnessing both
 “ to small and great.”

We find this character of witnesses sustained not only by the declarations of the apostles, but by their practice. It was by the
 power

^y Acts x. 39.

^z Acts xiii. 31.

^a Acts xxi. 22.

power of evidence that they undertook the ^{SECT.} conversion of the world. “^b With great ^{IV.} power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of Jesus.” This is manifest throughout the whole course of their ministry; from the first effusion of the Holy Ghost, through all the history of their private and separate labours.

It was from the visible effects of that power from on high shed forth on the apostles at the feast of Pentecost, that St. Peter drew this conclusion; “^c Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” By the force of this evidence, explained and urged home by the apostle, three thousand souls were converted. By the next ^d public
G miracle

^b Acts iv. 33.

^c Acts ii. 36.

^d Acts iii. 4.

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IV.

miracle of healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, the number of converts was encreased to five thousand. It was in consequence of ^e many signs and wonders wrought by the hands of the apostles, that “believers were the more added to the Lord, “multitudes both of men and women.”

If we attend still farther the progress of the word of God, and behold “^f the number of the disciples multiplying in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests obedient to the faith:” we see at the same time “Stephen full of faith and power, doing great wonders and miracles among the people.”

When the disciples, providentially “scattered abroad” by the first persecution at Jerusalem

^e Acts v. 12, 14.

^f Acts vi. 7, 8.

Jerusalem, “^g went every where preaching SECT.
IV.
“ the word,” along with the word they carried its evidence. “^h The hand of the Lord
“ was with them,” wherever they went,
“ and a great number believed, and turned
“ unto the Lord.”

Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and the inhabitants with one accord “ gave heed unto those things which he spake, but it was
“ because ⁱ they heard and saw the miracles
“ which he did.”

We find Paul, soon after his miraculous conversion, exerting all the powers of reasoning and argument in the service of religion,
“ ^k proving,” to the confusion of the Jews at Damascus, “ that Jesus was the very
G 2 Christ;”

^g Acts viii. 4.

^h Acts xi. 21.

ⁱ Acts viii. 5, 6.

^k Acts ix. 22.

SECT. IV. "Christ;" and "¹ disputing against the
 ~~~~~ "Grecians."

"<sup>m</sup> Arise," said Peter to the paralytic Eneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. And  
 " he arose immediately. And all that dwelt  
 " at Lydda, and Saron, saw him, and turned  
 " to the Lord."

At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas "<sup>n</sup> went  
 " both together into the synagogue of the  
 " Jews, and so spake that a great multitude  
 " both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks,  
 " believed." And when "the Lord granted  
 " signs and wonders to be done by their  
 " hands," he is said hereby to have "<sup>o</sup> given  
 " testimony unto the word of his grace."

The

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<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 29.

<sup>m</sup> Acts ix. 32, &c.

<sup>n</sup> Acts xiv. 1.

<sup>o</sup> Acts xiv. 3.



The inhabitants of Berea are justly applauded for their attention to scripture evidence, and their diligent researches after it, which is assigned as the cause of their belief.  
 “<sup>p</sup> They searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed.”

Paul “<sup>q</sup> reasoned with the Thessalonians out of the scriptures;” and persuaded the Athenians, by “<sup>r</sup> arguments drawn from the works of nature, and the ways of providence.

At “<sup>s</sup> Corinth he “ reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.”

And at “<sup>t</sup> Ephesus likewise “ he entered in-

G 3

to

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<sup>p</sup> Acts xvii. 11.

<sup>q</sup> Acts xvii. 2.

<sup>r</sup> Acts xvii. 16, &c.

<sup>s</sup> Acts xviii. 19.

<sup>t</sup> Acts xviii. 19.

SECT. IV. “ to the fynagogue, and reasoned with the  
 ~~~~~ “ Jews.”

Eloquence, joined to a deep knowledge of the scriptures, enabled Apollos ^u “ mightily to convince the Jews in Achaia, and “ that publicly, shewing by the scriptures, “ that Jesus was Christ.”

When Paul returned to Ephesus we find him again in the fynagogue, ^w “ speaking “ boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

Nay, finding himself opposed in his ministry by some hardened unbelievers, he ^x “ disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus “ by the space of two years ; so that all they “ which

^u Acts xviii. 24, &c.

^w Acts xix. 8.

^x Acts xix. 9.

“ which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup>
“ Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And
“ God wrought special miracles by the
“ hands of Paul,”

At Rome we find him alike indefatigable
in “ y expounding and testifying the king-
“ dom of God to the Jews, persuading them
“ concerning Jesus, both out of the law of
“ Moses, and out of the prophets, from
“ morning till evening.” And the historian
leaves this great apostle before us “ z preach-
“ ing the kingdom of God to all that came
“ in unto him, and teaching those things
“ which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with
“ all confidence.”

Thus was evidence every where made the
G 4 instrument

y Acts xxviii. 23.

z Acts xxviii. 31.

SECT.
IV.
~ instrument of conversion in the hands of
the apostles.

And to convey this evidence to all future ages, the history of our Saviour's life and miracles was recorded by the Evangelists.

St. Luke thus addresses Theophilus: " ^a It
" seemed good to me also, having had per-
" fect understanding of all things from the
" very first, to write unto thee in order,
" most excellent Theophilus, that thou might-
" est know the certainty of those things
" wherein thou hast been instructed."

In the same manner St. John thus expli-
citly declares the purpose of his writing.
" ^b These are written, that ye might believe
" that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
" and

^a Luke i. 3.

^b John xx. 31.

“ and that believing ye might have life
“ through his name.”

SECT.
IV.

The sum of the argument is this. Our blessed Lord himself, his Fore-runner, his Apostles, and his Historians, all unite in carrying on the work of conversion by means of external evidence. Infomuch that I believe we may safely assert, that there is not, in all the sacred history, the record of one conversion wrought, in the manner that some would have us believe all conversions are made, by inward illumination only.

Nay, the faith of the apostles themselves was established in the ordinary way, by outward evidence. For their conversion it was, and through them for the conversion of the whole world, that our Lord “ shewed himself alive to them after his passion,
“ by

SECT. IV. “ by many infallible proofs.” “ ^d And he
 “ that saw it bare record,” says St. John,
 “ and his record is true: and he knoweth
 “ that he saith true, that ye might believe.”

The words of those who brought the first account of our Lord's resurrection, seemed to the apostles as “ ^e idle tales, and they believed them not.” How was this unbelief overcome? St. John tells us his own case, as any other man would do, that he “ ^f saw “ and believed.” For their conviction it was that our Lord vouchsafed to “ ^g shew unto them his hands and his side.” And when ^h Thomas would not believe on the testimony of the other apostles, our Lord gave him that full evidence of his senses which he demanded. “ Thomas,” said he,
 “ reach

^d John xix. 35.

^e Luke xxvi. 11.

^f John xx. 8.

^g John xx. 20.

^h John xx. 14, &c.

“ reach hither thy finger, and behold my <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup>
“ hands, and reach hither thy hand, and
“ thrust it into my side; and be not faithless,
“ but believing.” When Thomas, overcome by this evidence, and melted by this condescension, broke out, in the language of true faith, into that exclamation, “ MY LORD AND MY GOD:” “ Thomas,” replied our Lord, “ thou hast believed, because
“ thou hast seen me: blessed are they that
“ have not seen, and yet have believed.” This passage demands all our attention. Had faith sprung from any inward impression, Thomas might as well have believed before this sensible conviction, as after it. But he withheld his assent, till it was extorted from him by the evidence of his senses. Upon which our Lord’s remark is, “ Blessed are
“ they that have not seen, and yet have be
“ lieved.” That is, “ The ordinary means
“ of blessing mankind with the knowledge
“ of the christian faith, will be by that evi-
“ dence which thou hast resisted, the testi-
“ mony

SECT. IV. “ many of well-informed witnesses: the
“ evidence of sense is indeed given to a few,
“ that they may be my chosen witnesses to
“ the rest of the world; but this kind of evi-
“ dence cannot be imparted to all; the work
“ of general conversion must be carried on
“ by rational and historical evidence.” It
must be acknowledged that this occurrence
is extremely remarkable, and seems to have
been disposed by our Lord on purpose to lay
open to us, in one striking incident, the
whole doctrine of the origin of faith.

If then this inward illumination did not
take place even in the age of miracles, and
in the times of the most plentiful effusions of
the Holy Spirit, we can have no reason to
expect it in these days, when his extraordi-
nary communications are withdrawn. And
if evidence gave birth to the christian faith,
even in its first production, we cannot sup-
pose it to be derived from another original
in its succession and encrease.

Thus

Thus is this doctrine established upon the fullest and clearest proof: a proof resting not upon some casual expression, which might be liable to various constructions, but upon a series of facts which cannot be mistaken; upon the uniform practice of our Lord and his apostles throughout their whole ministry. A proof of this nature can hardly leave room for any doubt or exception. We might safely therefore rest the matter here, were it not that this subject hath been unhappily obscured, more perhaps than any other, by the number of unintelligible things that have been advanced concerning it. This will be my apology for offering some farther considerations in support of that plain and simple account of the origin of faith, which we have from the gospels.

Many observations to our purpose will arise from the nature of the human mind; the nature of that evidence by which the
gospel

SECT.
VI.  gospel is accompanied; and the nature of faith.

The Creator hath appointed stated ways of acting upon the mind, as well as upon the body. If we would excite belief in the mind, we reason, persuade, and prove. And we have no more doubt that belief will arise from conviction, than that motion will follow from impulse.

Our Saviour did not alter the nature of man, but dealt with him agreeably to what his Creator had made him. He sought access to the mind in the natural way, neither giving it any new powers, nor setting aside those which it originally possessed, nor introducing any change in its train of operations. When therefore he wanted to bring mankind to a faith in him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, he did not leave this faith to be generated by some new and hidden communication within, but
had

had recourse to the established method of ^{SECT.}
argument and external evidence. He pour- ^{IV.}
ed conviction into the mind by that chan-
nel which the Creator had originally opened;
passing through a series of unheard-of la-
bours and distresses, and voluntarily dying,
that by returning in triumph from the
grave, he might shew himself to be the
Lord of life, and thus finish a proof, which
all might understand, of his being sent by
God.

The nature of this evidence is next to be
considered.

The material world is always made sub-
servient to the intellectual. The standing
wonders of the creation prove a God, and
an over-ruling providence. This was the
basis of all religion as it stood in the original
state of man. But after his fall from inno-
cency, and the rights of the first covenant,
the system of religion was to be changed.

To

SECT.
IV.

To this great change the regular course of nature could not bear witness. The heavens above, and the earth beneath, proclaimed to each other a Creator's power, and wisdom, and goodness. Thus far their language was clear and expressive. But it could go no farther. They could not tell the superior wonders of mercy that were to be displayed in the new dispensation. To authenticate this, and to shew that the giver of this dispensation was still the Lord of nature, it was necessary, that nature, with all her laws, should appear to be under his controul. The new revelation of God's will was therefore attested by many new appearances in nature. And thus were miracles introduced.

Accordingly we find them still employed to their original end of witnessing the truth of revelation. Wherever any new discovery of the will of heaven was made, it was still attested by miracles; and the power of working miracles devolved from prophet to prophet

phet throughout the whole course of revelation. Let us lay all these wonders together, and weigh well that system of evidence by which the whole of revelation is supported. If we look back to paradise, we see it first rising there, and springing up with revelation itself. Thence do their kindred streams flow on together, miracles still succeeding miracles, and the mighty tide of evidence encreasing as it descends through all future times. Behold the amazing pomp of wonders that surrounds mount Sinai, and by which the Mosaic dispensation was introduced! Behold the grand but pleasing scene of miracles, displayed in the ministry of our Saviour and his apostles; miracles all the offspring of benevolence and heavenly goodness, all suited to the spirit of that gospel which they accompanied! In our own times behold, if not miracles, at least the manifest effect of miracles, which do not yet cease to operate. The Jewish people are preserved in a wonderful state of dispersion amongst all

H

nations

SECT.
IV.

nations, to tell to all the world the miraculous production of their law; and christianity proves, by its very existence at this day, that the hand of heaven must have guarded it in its infant and oppressed state. Behold all these miracles uniting in one design, interwoven with prophecies, and thus forming a system of evidence equally admirable for the symmetry, the just disposition, of the parts; and the grandeur, extent, and harmony of the whole!—Behold all this, and then say to what end all this wonderful apparatus, this consent of all ages, this testimony of all nature, this concord of earth and heaven; if not to produce faith, or a belief of christianity by the power of evidence offered to our reason? Was this distribution of grand events throughout all ages no more than a vain ostentation of omnipotence, exhibited only to alarm and astonish the world, without serving any purpose of religion? Then indeed may we justly enquire, “to what purpose was all this

“ waste

“waste of the precious ointment made;” SECT.
IV.
to what end all this profusion of the miraculous power? For if conviction in the believer’s mind be always produced by the immediate impression of the Holy Spirit, without the help of external evidence, then are all the miracles, and all the records of them, at once rendered superfluous. The visible descent and appearance of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, with all those glorious demonstrations of “power from on high” that followed, might have been spared, if the world was to be converted, not by the visible and public operations of the Spirit, but by its inward and secret impressions working conviction in the mind of every individual. And we must remark upon our Lord’s miracles in general, that if they were not intended for the conviction of mankind, their noblest end is destroyed. Beneficent as they were, we see but half their lustre, if we consider them only as so many prescriptions to relieve a few individuals from bodily pain,

SECT.
IV. and not as the perpetual means of extending
salvation through all future ages.

Farther. Where there is an established cause, manifest to all the world, fixed, permanent, and regular in its action, it were contrary to all order and analogy, to all the known proceedings of God, either in the world of matter, or the world of spirits, to suppose the effect to be produced by another latent and concealed cause. Now we have the strongest established evidence for our faith in Christ. Shall then conviction, the natural effect of evidence, be supposed in this case to proceed from some other cause? Where one adequate cause of the effect appears, another supposed and doubtful cause will not readily be admitted. Where evidence, the universal cause of conviction, undeniably exists, it should seem to require an additional miracle to prevent the effect, rather than to produce it. In short, either the natural or the spiritual miracle must be unnecessary.

unnecessary. We are sure that the natural <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup> miracle doth exist; we must therefore suppose that the spiritual doth not.

Why hath God given us minds moveable by the weight of evidence, and why hath he prepared the evidence suited to move us, if nothing is to result from this correspondence?

The mind is moved by every inferior evidence in every lower concern, and can it be supposed to be unmoved by the highest evidence in the most important cause?

When we see the strongest external evidence applied, and to all appearance conviction arising in the mind of the believer from the force of the evidence, it is strange to say still, that this conviction arises from an inward illumination. It is as if when we see the seal applied to the wax, we should still insist, that the impression was not stamped

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IV. by the seal, but was formed by some inward
motion of the wax.

“Ye believe in God,” says our Saviour, “believe also in me.” The works of creation give us proofs of a God; the works of revelation in like manner prove a Redeemer. They who assert, that faith in a Redeemer arises from an inward impression, notwithstanding the outward evidence fitted to produce it, may with equal appearance of truth and reason say, that the belief of a God likewise arises from an inward impression, notwithstanding the evidence that all creation bears to this truth.

If we go on to consider the nature of faith itself, we shall still see farther reasons to conclude that it cannot have this origin. Consciousness indeed belongs to faith, as it does to every other act of the mind. When we have faith, we must feel that we have it: but faith itself can never be a feeling, nor the effect

effect of any feeling. Faith implies a belief <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup> of many facts: as that the Son of God came down from heaven, died, and rose again for us. It does not seem easy to conceive how we can have an inward feeling of the reality of these facts, if we set aside the history of them and its evidence. If it could be conceived, the operation would still seem unnecessary, because intended only to effect what the history, together with its evidence, is able to effect without it.

We must believe the history of prophecies and miracles, before we can believe our Saviour's divine mission. We must believe our Saviour's divine mission, before we can believe his revelations concerning redemption and a future state. This is the natural and necessary order. Let those then, who imagine that their faith in a Redeemer is an immediate divine impression, consider, whether they did in reality conceive this faith, without any belief of the previous articles,

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and entirely independent of them. Let one instance be produced of faith in a Redeemer, where the history of redemption was not first known. Where the means of producing faith are applied, to suppose that the faith arises from a new miracle, is to suppose that the means are insufficient; that the miracles and prophecies are not well attested; that they are not sufficient to prove our Saviour's divine mission; or his divine mission being proved, that we have not sufficient grounds to believe what he hath revealed to us.

To set aside the outward object in the production of faith, and to say that it arises entirely from within, independent of any power or impression of outward evidence, is to introduce into religion that theory, alike admired and rejected, which hath been applied to sensation. God may indeed, by an act of his creative power, excite faith in the mind without its suitable evidence, as he
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may stamp upon it the images of things <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup> without the application of a material world. ~~~~~
This cannot be denied. Yet still, for the same reasons that we believe matter to exist out of the mind, we must believe faith to have its outward object likewise.

Thus do the nature of the human mind, the nature of gospel evidence, and the nature of faith itself, all conspire to support that account of the origin of faith, which we have in the gospels.

The same observations may be applied to that other office of inward illumination, which our modern pretenders to inspiration lay claim to, of guiding and directing them in the practice of religion, and in the ways of life. For this interferes with that outward and established rule of life, which heaven has laid before us in the holy scriptures, as the other does with the established evidence.

It

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It will hardly be maintained that all these pretended inward feelings and illuminations are true and of divine original. Some have been confessedly delusive, and the parents of most diabolical errors. How then are the true to be distinguished from the delusive? There is no other way, but by comparing them with the word of God. If their suggestions be repugnant to that word, they must be false. If consonant to it, they may indeed be true, but must seem unnecessary, because they teach us nothing but what that word would teach us without their help. Thus does every consideration bring us back to that word of God, which was given us for our instruction in all divine truth.—If it be said that these inward suggestions are supplemental to the word of God, and therefore not unnecessary; it must first be proved that revelation is incomplete, and that we have room to expect new revelations. Would the abettors of these opinions prove, that they have been favoured with new revelations?

tions? Let them produce any article of <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup> faith, any rule either of belief or practice, which they have learnt by that means, and which we do not as clearly learn from the written word of God.

The method of inspiration, or inward impression, was indeed necessary in the case of the apostles, to lead them into all truth, because their information could come only from heaven. But when they had received the heavenly gift of truth, and had provided for its conveyance to all the world by their teaching, and by the records of truth which they left for the use of all mankind, it was no longer necessary that others should be instructed in the same manner. The business of inspiration was now fully answered, and the world was henceforth to learn that truth from the written word of God, which the apostles had composed from the dictates of the Spirit. The Spirit led the apostles into all truth for no other end, than

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than that they might lead all the rest of the world into the same heavenly light. To say that all Christians are still to be led into all truth immediately by the Spirit, is rendering the designation of the apostles of none effect. Since there can be no need of their interposition to convey the truths of revelation, if we may learn them by a more compendious way,

God indeed fed man with angel's food; but it was in a wilderness, where there was no natural food. But no sooner did his chosen people come into a land flowing with milk and honey, than this miraculous supply ceased, and they were left to be fed by the bounteous hand of nature. Such is the case of Christians. The miraculous powers, and extraordinary illuminations of the Holy Spirit, were necessary at first, to introduce a religion new to the world, and superior to reason; but as soon as by means of these Christianity was established, and the volume
of

of scriptures compleated, we were thence-
forward left to be guided by the common
and established means. SECT.
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But—whilst we “pluck up the tares,” let us beware of “plucking up the wheat also.” I am sensible that the subject requires to be managed with delicacy and discretion: and that this free attempt to expose the errors of enthusiasm, may be regarded by some as a want of respect for the doctrines of our church. But God forbid that truth and error should be so unhappily complicated and interwoven with each other, at least in points of this importance, as that the veneration due to the sacred character of truth should be any sanction for falsehood; or should restrain us from speaking in the freest manner, our disapprobation of it. However, to guard against all suspicion, it may be necessary to trace out those limits which clearly divide the pure doctrines of our church, and of scripture, from the errors
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we have been speaking of; and to point out, in a few words, where the distinction lies between the extravagant pretensions of enthusiasm, and that influence of the Holy Spirit, without which we acknowledge that all our best abilities are impotence; our wisdom darkness and folly.

The Enthusiast then claims more than even the apostles themselves enjoyed. For he claims not only to be led by the Spirit, as they were, into all truth; but likewise to be endued with faith by the Spirit alone, without the help of evidence: a privilege, which, we have seen, the apostles never claimed.

If these pretensions then are carried too far, which I suppose will readily be admitted, the question will be, how the influence of the Holy Spirit is limited; what we may reasonably expect from it; and how, in short, his ordinary assistance is distinguished from

from his extraordinary? By his extraordi-<sup>SECT.
IV.</sup>
nary inspiration, he taught the divinely
commissi^{on}ed preachers of religion, all those
sacred truths which they published to the
world; and enabled them to prove their
commissi^{on} by prophecies and miracles.
Does he still inspire those truths which he
gave the apostles to publish? Does he still
work conviction without that evidence which
he himself fitted out? In a word, do the
private operations of the heavenly Inspirer
set aside his public?—This cannot be the
case. We may be sure that his operations
are all consistent; and so far from counter-
acting, that they all concur with, and mu-
tually support each other. Whenever there-
fore his ordinary influences are carried so
far, as plainly to interfere with his extraor-
dinary, we may be sure that they are car-
ried to excess. He does not give again in
secret that evidence, or that light for our
guidance in religion, which he had before
publicly given. His private gifts are only
such

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IV. such as may aid and promote the effects
of his public.

These principles, than which nothing can be more plain and undeniable, give us, with great precision, that line by which the ordinary influences of the Spirit are every where bounded. For they can be no more than supplemental to the extraordinary. And therefore the extent of his public operations, which is well known, and clearly defined, will in all cases limit the extent of the private.

It follows, that he does not act upon us merely by inward illumination, independently either of those powers of the mind which the Creator hath bestowed upon us, or of those outward means of conviction which he himself hath established. He invigorates all the faculties of the soul, but acts only in concurrence with them, and by the intervention of outward and established

blished means. Far from demanding a sacrifice of our own abilities, or from rendering them unnecessary, he calls for the utmost exertion of them. He strengthens the understanding, prompts and bends the will; but he does by no means enlighten the understanding, or move the will, independently of the common revelation. He enforces the impression of the evidence upon the mind; casts an heavenly radiance round those truths which have been revealed, and aids the effect of those motives upon the will which revelation sets before us.

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The Creator hath fitted out our bodies in a curious manner for receiving and digesting food, and turning it to nourishment. But still the body cannot sustain itself, nor would this food turn to nourishment, without the divine blessing and support. So it is with the soul. The divine assistance is necessary to its encrease and nourishment; but the soul too hath its food as well as the body,

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SECT.
IV. its outward means of nourishment by which
the blessing acts.

Our Saviour, even in his miracles, made use of the powers of nature. When he restored sight to the blind, he did not strike an inward light in the eye itself; but vision was still excited, in the way that the Creator at first established, by the common light of the sun. So when the world was to be converted, he did not dart an inward illumination into the mind of every individual: it was sufficient that he established for the use of all, AN EVIDENCE EQUAL TO THE SUN IN BRIGHTNESS.

I cannot conclude without adding a few words concerning the evil tendency of the opinion we have been considering, especially in places dedicated to the united service of religion and learning.

If reason is excluded from all share in
forming

forming and conducting the principles of our faith; if the whole work of religion is supposed to be carried on by some concealed operations within, in which we are entirely passive, having nothing to do but to obey the secret impulse; how unfavourable an influence must this doctrine shed on all the business of these places, where we have hitherto been accustomed to consider learning as bearing the honourable relation of handmaid to religion! Alas, how degraded must all the functions of reason appear, when thus divorced from virtue, her noblest companion; and how mean, how trifling, all her labours, when they are no longer conceived to have any tendency to promote the only real business of this life, our preparation for a better! If opinions of this kind once come to prevail among us, like an unkindly damp, they must chill all the powers of the mind. For what is there, what can there be, to excite or call her forth to action, now that her highest encouragement, her

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fairest palm of honour, is snatched from her? Farewel then all efforts of genius, all generous emulation in the race of glory! Farewel all thirst of knowledge, all culture of polite literature, or useful science; all that can adorn or improve the mind, farewell: and welcome, in their stead, monkish ignorance and barbarism! The mind, abandoned to the guidance of a fancied inspiration, runs into all the wilds of enthusiasm: there all neglected and melancholy it wanders; haunted by dark and gloomy visions; deserted by itself; and lost to every thing that is rational, manly, and truly noble. All human learning will be reckoned prophane and heathenish, and will be supposed to vitiate and debauch the mind, instead of improving it. Reason itself will be regarded with a jealous eye, as the rival of true religion. These noble structures, which have been through ages sacred to learning, will be esteemed the temples of a vain idol; and all our studies, idolatry.

But,

But, on the other hand, if reason, when <sup>SECT.
IV.</sup> duly employed, be under the conduct and blessing of the Holy Spirit; how must our confidence in this heavenly support bear us up under all the toils of study! Cherished by this warmth from heaven, the human mind will attain to its full maturity. This consideration stamps a new dignity on the meanest of our labours; and human learning is ennobled by its alliance with divine. Every art of reasoning, every exercise of the mind, will be regarded as a discipline to prepare us for actions truly worthy of our ambition; and whilst we give strength and activity to the understanding in the schools, we shall be considered as training it up for the service of God. Then will the champion of religion come forth laden with spoils gathered from every field of science, to enter upon the sacred ground. There, with all the united powers of reason and learning, he will maintain his cause against enthusiasm on the one hand, and infidelity on the other.

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and will establish the evidence and the principles of his religion on their proper basis; on that rock, against which no enemy shall ever prevail. Then will true religion and useful learning flourish together. Then will all our studies tend at once to the glory of God, and to the honour of human nature. Then will our religion be truly “a reasonable service;” and then may we be said to worship God, not only in SPIRIT, but also in TRUTH.

SECTION

SECTION V.

Of the tendency of faith.

HAVING already considered the nature ^{SECT. V.} and origin of faith; having seen what it is, and how it arises in the mind; we come now to consider its TENDENCY and OPERATIONS: how it acts upon the mind, and what is the result of its action.

And here three enquiries will succeed each other. I. Whether faith hath in reality any tendency to produce good works or not? And if it shall appear to have such a tendency, then, II. What is the nature of its connection with good works? III. What is the full effect of its operation upon the mind, where it is duly cultivated and improved?

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We are to enquire, in the first place, whether faith hath in reality any tendency to produce good works or not?

It is one great proof at once of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, that there is a mutual communication and intercourse of good amongst all his works. If we consider the structure of things upon this earth which we inhabit, we find nothing whose design centers in itself alone; nothing but what is formed with manifest propensities out of itself, and with a visible tendency to the general good. There is in the works of nature itself a sort of inanimate benevolence, or at least an image of benevolence. There is a connection, a manifest subordination of each species to the good of all, running through every thing we behold here; and even our world itself is united by the chain of a mutual influence with other worlds. Those vast orbs which revolve around us, do not play at large in the immense field of space, but

but gravitate towards each other: their particular motions are governed by their mutual attractions, and each lends its influence to guide the rest in their orbits. Our imagination cannot help going farther, and representing this system of ours to be to other systems, what our planet confessedly is to other planets. Systems form with systems their remoter alliances, and revolve in ampler orbits. Thus is the harmony of nature filled up.

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If we ascend from matter to life and intelligence, we find that benevolence which is strongly portrayed in matter, living, and pervading every where in this nobler world. Every being here bears strong marks of this universal law, has a thousand evident relations to the advantage of others, a thousand connections with their interests, from which it cannot disengage itself without injury to its own. This is clearly discoverable in some degree in the lowest ranks of animal beings.

But

SECT. But as we rise higher in the scale of creation,
V.  benevolence still makes a more considerable part in the design; so that in every superior class, the power of contributing to the happiness of others, encreases in full proportion to the powers belonging to private and selfish enjoyment. Nay, it may perhaps be said, that these benevolent powers do chiefly constitute the superiority, and are of themselves the noblest mark of distinction. It is thus that in the human mind the selfish and the social passions are so closely interwoven with each other, that men of the acuteest penetration and genius, when they have undertaken to analyse the mind, and to trace human actions to their source, have been lost in the research, and have not been able to tell us with any accuracy, when and how they are distinguished. It is thus that we are prompted by the strongest instincts to seek the good of others, which is by the most powerful feelings brought home to ourselves. It is thus that sympathy often
seizes

seizes the soul, and takes such entire possession of us, that we are for a time wholly forgetful of ourselves. It is thus that reflection on having done good to others, constitutes our finest enjoyments; that all our noblest powers are brought to perfection, and our best endowments acquired by seeking the happiness of others; and that the richest furniture of our minds, the virtues, are so entirely at the service of others, as that they can hardly be called our own.

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Shall we say then, that a law so subservient to beauty and benevolence, hath been neglected in religion? That this last great system of christianity is built on narrower principles than either the material or the moral? That whilst they are all regular, consistent, and harmonious, here on the contrary every thing is detached and unconnected, the parts bearing no relation to each other, nor to the general good? Shall we suppose, that faith stands at the centre of
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this system a solitary and a selfish thing, a neutral principle alike indifferent to good or bad actions, dispensing no influence in favour of benevolence, and wholly unconnected with virtue? Then surely it had been better if we had been left entirely to the conduct of nature and reason; since corrupted as our nature is, and weak our reason, there are still under all our degeneracy and weakness, some considerable remains of regard for the good of others, which nature continually gives birth to, and which reason approves; whereas, on the supposition here considered, faith hath nothing in it that is generous or social, no tendency to enlarge our minds, and open them to a feeling of another's happiness, or to excite and animate us to the pursuit of it.

But this cannot be. It cannot be that He who laid down his life for the good of mankind, should have no regard for mankind's good in laying the foundation of his religion.

religion. It cannot be that He who died be-
cause we had departed from virtue, should
establiſh his new diſpenſation on principles
which have no tendency to bring us back to
virtue.

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“ In Chriſt Jeſus,” ſaith the apoſtle, that
is, in the religious diſpenſation finiſhed and
eſtabliſhed by him, “ neither circumciſion
“ availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion,
“ but faith working by love^a.” It appears
then, that faith worketh, or as the original
* expreſſion implies, is attended with an e-
nergy or inward force. And if it works
within us, it muſt work to ſome certain end;
which can be only the production of its pro-
per fruits, good works.

If faith hath no connection with goodneſs,
then may man be at once a true and com-
pleat

^a Gal. v. 6.

* ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΕΝΕΡΓΟΥΜΕΝΗ, Faith working within us.

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pleat christian by virtue of his faith, whilst he continues an unconverted heathen in practice. Then is faith intended only to fill the head, and to amuse the imagination, without influencing the will, or subduing the heart. It is contented with reducing to its obedience and cultivating only the most barren parts of the soul, whilst it leaves all the fruitful regions in their wild and barbarous state. But it is undeniable, that faith brings along with it into the breast of the christian many new motives to virtue which the heathen is a stranger to. It is the resisting these motives, and acting in opposition to them, that constitutes the peculiar guilt of the wicked christian. Hence it is, that the life of a wicked christian is a perpetual contradiction to itself; and that wicked works and faith united form the most unnatural, let me say, the most monstrous, of all characters.

The gospel instructs us clearly in every
part

part of our duty ; it shews us our true situation here, and our expectations in eternity. The Creator appointed two great lights in the firmament, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, not merely to please the eye, and to gild the creation, but that man might be enabled to act with freedom, and to perform all the business of life. And can we imagine that this great light of religion was set up without any regard to action ? It surely was given us for some higher end than merely that we might contemplate and admire it ; it was given to enlighten us in the performance of the most important work, and to guide us in the great employment of doing good.

But the word of God is not only “ ^b a
“ lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our
paths ;”

^b Ps. cxix. 105.

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“ paths;” it not only shews us our duty, but impels us by the strongest motives to fulfil it. Whatever those motives are by which we are most readily influenced in the affairs of life, faith brings them all to act upon us in favour of virtue. If we can be touched by more generous motives; if the nobler affections of gratitude and love have any power over us, faith points to a Saviour expiring on the cross for our sakes. If we can feel for the good of others, and if a benevolent heart unites their happiness to ours, faith shews us a whole world redeemed, and attaches us to their interests by bonds which shall never be dissolved. If our own interests are dear to us, if hopes or fears can move us, faith leads the enraptured soul amongst angels and purest spirits to scenes of endless bliss; or unbars before the affrighted imagination the gates of hell.

And need we, after all this, enquire whether faith stirs up the mind to action,
or

or if it remains there in a still and quiescent state? We must know as little of the nature of faith, as of the constitution of the mind, to think this possible. Faith comes armed in every power by which the mind is usually moved; and the mind is every way disposed to apprehend, to feel, to be governed by its force. It is impossible then to conceive that all this power should be absolutely lost, and that no effect should result from it: that whilst matter, inert and resisting matter, is alive to every impulse, and obedient to every action, the free and active soul, in the meantime, should remain motionless and inanimate under the impression of the strongest powers that can be applied to it: since in order to all this we must suppose, that in religion every thing is taken out of its natural state; that here all motives lose their force, and the mind its feeling.

We conclude therefore, that faith hath

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a tendency, and that a very strong one, to produce good works.

It may be proper, before we proceed, to point out in a few words the use and importance of this enquiry.

1. If faith hath no such tendency, then we must believe that the design of all religion terminates here, that we have already arrived at its utmost limits, and that faith saves us alone, and by its own inherent virtue. But if this tendency is manifest, and the clear result of its very nature and constitution, then it is evident, that religion hath much farther views, and looks beyond faith itself. The clearing of this question therefore is securing a very important station, without which we could not with any security have pursued our enquiries farther, or have attempted to establish any conclusions beyond it.

2. Un-

2. Unless we discern this tendency of <sup>SECT.
V.</sup> faith to produce goodness, we can neither see the wisdom of the Author of our religion in the constitution of it, nor can we entertain a proper value for this first principle of our religion, nor proper notions of its dignity. When we discern this tendency of faith, we see a reason why it was made the leading condition of our salvation: we see a reason worthy the approbation of heaven, for the distinguished place it possesses in the christian dispensation. It was made the chief corner-stone in our religion, because it was fitted to support the whole fabric.

And thus do we prove the wisdom of the Giver of revelation, in the same way that we prove the wisdom of God from the works of the creation. It is from the wise disposition of every part of nature, the undeniable fitness of every thing to some useful end, that we conclude beyond a doubt the wisdom of the Creator. And in religion therefore,

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when we see every thing put together with the same wisdom of design, we must again acknowledge the hand of the same wise Master-BUILDER. An illustrious proof this, amongst many others, that both systems come from the same author! We see the same shining characters of divine wisdom in both. In the volume of revelation we clearly distinguish the same HAND-WRITING OF THE DEITY, that we had been before accustomed to in reading the volume of nature.

II. We may now proceed to our second enquiry, viz. What is the nature of that connection which subsists between faith and good works?

The connection between causes and effects are of two distinct kinds. That between physical causes and their effects is necessary and invariable. The cause acting in the same circumstances never fails to produce the same effect. So that the cause being gi-

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ven, the effect is sure to follow. There are <sup>SECT.
V.</sup> other causes which have not the same necessary and invariable operation; when the cause being given, the event is yet uncertain. They have a tendency to produce a certain effect, but being applied to agents which have a freedom and power of their own, there must be a concurrence of this power and freedom to the actual production of the effect. The natural tendency of the cause is ever liable to be defeated by an opposition of that free and powerful agent to whom it is applied. These are stiled moral causes; and act not by a compulsive power which forces the effect, but by an influence which inclines the moral agent to make it his own free act.

We are to enquire, to which of these classes that connection belongs, which hath been proved to subsist between faith and virtue?

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Some would persuade us, that faith produces good works necessarily and mechanically. They seem to think them really and actually inseparable from each other; and tell us that faith once having taken possession of the mind, good works flow from it as necessarily as light from the sun.

But this opinion is contradicted first of all by the nature of man, and the nature of virtue as it exists in man. For if good works are produced by a necessary operation of faith, then man becomes a mere natural agent, like the sun or the air, and the work is no longer a moral but a physical effect. Faith makes him good, as the circulation of the blood makes him healthy; and the poor man is relieved by his bounty, just as the earth is refreshed by a timely shower. But can we suppose that freedom was given us only for trivial uses, and for low concerns; and that we have a choice of every other object, except of virtue, which alone is worthy
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of our choice? Can we suppose that faith ^{SECT. V.} despoils us of the noblest gift of heaven, and degrades, instead of exalting, our nature, by depriving us of that power which placed us at the head of this lower creation? This is contrary to our Lord's account of the design of his religion, who assures us that it was given to recover and enlarge our liberty, and not to take it away. " ' Then said Jesus to the Jews which believed on him, " If ye continue in my word, then are ye " my disciples indeed; and ye shall know " the truth, and the truth shall make you " free. If the Son shall make you free, ye " shall be free indeed."

But 2dly, The slightest reflection on the nature and origin of faith will shew us, that faith cannot have this compulsive power. Faith is a belief of the gospel, ari-

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sing, as we have seen, on the evidence of the gospel. No sooner therefore is this evidence known and believed, than faith is fully established. Had faith then produced good works by a natural necessity, the gospel would have been compleated in its evidence, and every addition of doctrine, precept, motive, or example, would have been unnecessary. For faith itself being compleatly established on its evidence, and good works, as is here supposed, being the necessary effect of faith, it is plain that the whole business of the gospel was already accomplished. Any rule to direct the operation of faith, whilst that operation is supposed to be necessary, must appear absolutely superfluous; and a written system of laws for the conduct of believers must have been as useless and vain, as a system of written laws for the conduct of nature in the work of vegetation, in the movement of the planets, or in any other of her stated operations.

But

But the all-wise and benevolent author of <sup>SECT.
V.</sup> the christian system seems plainly to have had very different conceptions of the power of faith. He did not think fit to rest in the establishment of faith alone, but added a rule of life; filled up, and finished that rule in all its parts for our guidance in every branch of duty; annexed the strongest sanctions to move us to an observance of this rule; and gave the brightest illustration of it in his own great example. From all which it is clear, that our Saviour did not give to faith a power of producing good works necessarily and spontaneously, since in that case he would not have added the light of laws, the power of sanctions, the influence of example. This would have been adding a doubtful and precarious power for the production of an effect, which was already secured by the establishment of a necessary power.

This point will receive a strong illustration
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from the case of the first christians. In our age and country, and wherever the gospel is established and its doctrines freely taught, we can hardly find an instance of faith arising on the foundation of its evidence, where at least the principal laws of christianity are not known. The evidence and the duties of christianity are instilled together; nay, it often happens, that the duties are taught, and generally understood, where the evidence hath been very little attended to. It is not therefore so easy to observe amongst ourselves their natural order and dependence on each other. But at the first preaching of christianity circumstances were widely different. The strongest evidences of our Saviour's divine mission were then frequently displayed, where his doctrines were little known. Every miracle had its converts; nothing being more common, in the history of our Lord, than after the account of a miracle to hear that many were thereby induced to believe on him. But such converts could

could not be instructed in the laws of christianity, though they had been eye-witnesses of its evidence. And such at first were the Apostles themselves. For our Lord lived and died, rose again and gave full proof of his resurrection, and thereby compleated the evidence of the gospel, before the laws of the gospel were fully revealed, even to the apostles themselves. Though these first disciples of christianity therefore might have the firmest faith in their Redeemer, yet this faith could not enable them in all respects to live up to the duties of christianity, since those duties were but imperfectly known. SECT.
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The impulse of faith then cannot of itself be sufficient to produce good works, without a knowledge of those divine laws by which our works are to be formed. Faith of itself cannot give us a knowledge of the will of God, and therefore cannot enable us of itself to walk according to that will. Faith gives us the disposition to obey. The act of obedience

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obedience must be regulated by the rule of obedience, which is the will of God. Faith is the principle of obedience, and not the rule.

3dly, The manner in which faith is connected with good works, is clearly pointed out to us in one short expression of St. Paul, which hath been already mentioned. “Faith which worketh, or obtaineth its proper effect by love,” is the Apostles expression. Faith, or a firm belief of our Redeemer’s goodness, mercy, and unspeakable love to us, enkindles in us a fervent love for him, which love must lead to a ready compliance with his will in all things. Faith therefore worketh by the intervention of love to the production of good works. And love is a free and generous principle, fitted to a free and moral agent.

Lastly, Against this opinion we appeal to experience. If the operation of faith be supposed

supposed necessary, it must of consequence ^{SECT. VI.} be universal: and good works, as its necessary effect, must be inseparable from it. For it is supposed, that nothing depends on the concurrence or will of the agent, but that the principle is certain in its operation, and never liable to be defeated by any perverseness of man's disposition. It must therefore influence every part of our conduct alike. The faithful must be uniformly and invariably good, free from all sin, and superior to all temptation.

Thus will the believer be taken out of a state of probation; being secured against all the dangers of temptation by the force of the principle within him. How repugnant this theory is to the true state of religion in the best of christians, an appeal to their own experience will best determine. Do they find themselves every where absolutely superior to the world, never moved by temptation, or in fact never overcome by it? Are no labours

SECT. V. of their own required, no watchfulness over themselves? Do they experience no conflict, no trial, no relapse? Do they find that faith over-rules the freedom of their will to evil, and renders them necessarily good? They who pretend this, must be confuted whenever they consult their own breasts. If they are hardy enough to assert thus much, their own actions will bear the strongest evidence against them, and prove to all the world, whatever may be their pretences, that even the best of men are not necessarily good.

But farther. If faith is supposed to produce good works necessarily, then there could be no degrees of christian goodness. Faith must produce its full effect instantly, and must raise the believer at once to the sublimest pitch of virtue. In that case, since there could only be one grand division of mankind into the faithful and the infidel, whilst the latter were abandoned to every vice of corrupted nature, the former would
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V.

be not only all virtuous, but all equally virtuous. Thus one half of the world would be all light and goodness, whilst the other half would be under one universal blot of depravity and corruption. But we find in fact in the christian world all the intermediate shades between the two extremes of purest light and total darkness: we find in the characters of mankind all possible intermixtures of light and shade, all degrees of goodness, varied from the reluctant performances of the first returning sinner, to the perfection of the saint. A fact which is absolutely inconsistent with the supposition of faith working all its effects necessarily, since it must then work them universally, and every where alike. The variety of christian characters then is totally irreconcilable to this theory of faith. It is a fact which can only be accounted for by admitting that we are free in the use of faith as of every other gift; and that this inward principle of goodness, when lodged in the heart, is improve-
able

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able by us in proportion to that attention we give to it, and to our industry in the work of religion; or declines and sinks to decay, like every other talent, by our neglect of it.

The result of all is, that the operation of faith is not necessary and mechanical, but that it works within us to the production of good works by such a tendency as is consistent with the nature of man, and leaves his free-agency inviolate. It operates strongly by motives of the most powerful kind, but not irresistably so as to over-power the will, and destroy its freedom.

Thus is the way cleared for our third enquiry, "What are the full effects of faith upon the mind, where it is duly cultivated and improved?" An enquiry which cannot fail of opening to us a field of much pleasing contemplation, as it will lead us to take a view of our nature breaking forth from

from its corrupt state, rising fast towards perfection, and cloathed in its best attainments. SECT.
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But before we proceed to this, I shall beg leave to point out in a few words, the use and importance of the doctrine which hath been just established.

They who suppose faith to produce good works necessarily, must be led to rest entirely in faith, and this being once acquired, to acquiesce in it without any farther views, and to relax and suspend all endeavours after improvement in goodness. And this accounts for their conduct when both in their writings and public exhortations they dwell altogether on faith alone, and very rarely enter on the subject of good works. A conduct which must indeed be right, if the principle which they go upon were right, that good works are the invariable and necessary production of faith.

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But if this theory of faith be wrong; if faith depends for its full effect, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, on the free-will of man, then we see the necessity of our own care and diligence in cultivating this principle of faith. We see in the strongest light the necessity of extending this care and vigilance unabated through the whole time of our probation here; of studying the scriptures, not only as a rule of faith, but as the only rule of life; aiming still at higher attainments in virtue, never vainly flattering ourselves, at any period of this life, that “we have already attained, or are already perfect;” but, in a word, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, of pressing onward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of GOD in JESUS CHRIST.”

SECTION

SECTION VI.

Of the operation of faith.

IN enquiring into the effects of faith upon ^{SECT.} ^{VI.} the mind, and the changes which it must there produce where it is duly cultivated and improved, we have all the data to proceed upon that we can desire. We know the nature of faith, and we know the constitution of the mind. We have nothing to do but to attend to the result which must arise from the application of the one to the other, to watch the operation, and to observe the effect.

Had our minds remained in their state of original perfection, even then the introduction of so new a principle into a system of affections, passions, and the several intellec-

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tual powers, could not have failed of producing great changes in it. The difficulty however would have been less to have given a right direction to a mind rightly constituted. But our whole mental system was disordered. Our understanding was darkened, our will enslaved, and our affections attached to unworthy objects. Virtue had lost that influence over our minds which was originally given to it. No longer was it able, by its own force, to retain us in that regular course of duty in which we were appointed to move. We began to deviate from it, to break the harmony of our system, and to fly off from our central light. Virtue hath therefore been supplied with new powers. The Sun of Righteousness hath lent it all his beams, and hath given it a brightness which it never knew before.

It is not easy to give us, who were born to the full enjoyment of the gospel, a strong and adequate idea of the value of a blessing which

which we have always possessed. Its superi-
ority was more clearly seen at the first ap-
pearance of christianity, when it could be
contrasted on one hand with the gross igno-
rance of the vulgar heathen, and on the o-
ther with that feeble lamp of philosophy,
wherein was collected however all the light
that could be supplied from all the sources
of human reason. To a world in this situa-
tion, to a people “ who walked in darkness,
“ and dwelt in the land of the shadow of
“ death,” how astonishing must have been
the first appearance of this great light ! We
who never walked in darkness are less sensi-
ble of this effect ; we see this great light
without being struck by it, because the full
blaze of day did not burst all at once around
our understanding.

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It will be necessary therefore to consider
distinctly the various ways by which the
christian faith applies itself to the human
mind for its improvement.

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And first of all, it begins its operations by enlightening the understanding, and by pouring into it streams of celestial knowledge. We now become "acquainted with "God," and obtain a more enlarged view of the divine nature and perfections. Reason indeed, properly exercised on the creation, could not fail to see many of those rays which beaming from the Creator were reflected from his works. Such of the divine perfections as had been exerted in the creation, could never lie hid; since the creation itself was perpetually bearing its testimony to them, and all its parts were for ever telling to every beholder, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of Him who framed them. But the creation itself, though a fair transcript of the divine perfections, was still an imperfect one. Could we suppose it possible that we could look through all nature, and could discern every character of wisdom that the Almighty hath impressed on every part of this system, our
conceptions

conceptions of the divine perfections would ^{SECT. VI.} no doubt be exalted in proportion as our prospect of his glorious works was more extended. But even then our knowledge of the eternal Creator would not so far surpass that degree of knowledge which we now imbibe from seeing only a part of his works, as it would fall short of that which we shall one day obtain from a view of systems still more glorious. The works of God can only convey to our understandings an image of so much perfection as hath been stamped upon them. But our creation is far too narrow to receive a compleat impression of the Divinity. When we shall have heard all that this creation can tell us of God, we shall have heard only a small part of all that God is.

From what we see at present of created excellency, we justly infer the infinite perfection of the Creator himself. But we are mistaken if we imagine that for this reason

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our conceptions of this perfection can never be raised higher. There is room for infinite discoveries in the divine nature beyond all that we can at present conceive: and if we suppose our powers of mental vision to be growing and enlarging through all eternity, still they would be unable to take in that great object which no created mind can fully comprehend. Where indeed can be the impropriety, since it hath been demonstrated that there is in nature a series of infinites descending and decreasing beyond all assignable bounds; where can be the impropriety of saying, that we shall discover an endless ascending progression of infinite perfection rising beyond infinite perfection in the divine nature? So that that conception of infinite perfection which the most exalted human understanding can embrace, falls infinitely short of that which fills the glowing breast of the highest Seraph: and yet the glowing conceptions of the highest Seraph fall

fall still infinitely farther below what God himself is. SECT.
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We cannot wonder then to be told, that Redemption hath made farther discoveries of the divine nature than creation had made. In that first work, glorious as it was, the Deity was far from being wholly put forth. Even those divine attributes which were most clearly and distinctly seen in the works of the creation, have acquired new light in the progress of redemption; and others have been discovered of which the creation gave us no intelligence.

Of all the divine attributes, the power of the Creator was that which arose at first in its fullest orb. For we cannot conceive an higher exertion of power, than that of producing a creation out of nothing. Yet those acts of power which have been exerted in the course of redemption, if not equal to this first act, are at least to us strong and necessary

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necessary confirmations of it. Had things proceeded for ever in one uniform and unvaried course, it might have given some colour to the opinion of those who dream of the eternity of the universe, and fancy that the machine is kept in motion by some power inherent in itself. But when we see all nature bending before the Giver of this new dispensation, and submitting all its established laws to his will, these wonderful operations shew clearly from whence all its power is derived. He whom nature obeys, must be NATURE'S GOD. These extraordinary appearances are acts of submission and homage which the several parts of the universe pay to their Lord, whereby they acknowledge themselves his creatures, and proclaim to all the world that "power be-
" longeth unto God."

Wisdom is another attribute of the Deity, which manifests itself clearly in the works of the creation. It is written on all the productions

productions of nature, and is fully display-^{SECT. VI.}
ed in the harmony and fair proportions of every part of the universe, and the grandeur of the whole design. Yet doth wisdom break forth with additional lustre in the work of redemption. With what amazement do we look back on this glorious plan rising and encreasing in remotest ages, and brought to perfection by ways as far above the wisdom of man to contrive, as above his power to execute! And how adorable is that wisdom which laid the foundation and established the laws of the Messiah's kingdom, and again brought light and order out of darkness and confusion in the moral system, as it had before done in the natural!

If we look round all the Creator's works, we can no where find an instance of his power exerted without his wisdom, nor of his wisdom without his goodness. It is the harmony and perpetual union of these attributes,

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tributes, every where co-operating to the same great end, that is our best and clearest proof of the divine unity. The goodness of the Creator is manifested in the ample provision he hath made for the happiness of all his creatures, by adapting all the wonderful productions of his wisdom and power in the material world to the uses of the living creation; and making all the rich furniture of inanimate nature subservient to some enjoyment of sense or intelligence. But in redemption goodness rises to still greater heights, and is exalted into the new attribute of mercy; which hath added to all the blessings of creation, that last and supreme gift of heaven, the forgiveness of sins. In the creation there was no room for the exercise of this attribute, and therefore we find no proof of it there. Mercy is the peculiar discovery, and the glory of the gospel, through every page of which it sheds its saving influence. Indeed neither justice nor mercy could find an object in an innocent world.

world. It was on a world involved in guilt and misery that they first met; and when we were sinking into ruin and overwhelmed with despair, then it was that they descended from heaven, holding forth to our view that Roll of Salvation whereon was inscribed, "Glory to God in the highest, and "on earth peace, good-will towards men." Then did "mercy and truth meet together;" the *mercy* of God interposing to save the sinful race of men, was reconciled with his *truth*, which stood engaged to execute the sentence of death upon them; then did "righteousness and peace kiss each other;" the closest connection took place, where there seemed to be the strongest opposition, between the *righteousness* of God, and the *peace* of man.

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We are farther instructed by the christian faith in the true condition of our situation here, and the laws of our nature and our duty are laid before us in the fullest and clearest

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~ clearer manner: laws so equitable, that even the adversaries of revelation have ever acknowledged their excellence: laws so wisely framed, and so well adapted to our nature, that when speculative men have undertaken to build their systems of morality, and have furnished them with riches borrowed liberally from the treasures of revelation, they have been apt to mistake the dictates of inspiration, for the deductions of their own reason.

But we are not only instructed in whatever concerns our duty or our happiness here: our understandings are led forth into a future state, all eternity is unveiled before us, and we see the great doctrines of life and immortality in the clearest light. The gospel hath laid open to our view those bright eternal fields, the prospect of which must otherwise have been for ever intercepted by clouds impenetrable to the human eye. The utmost labour of the human understanding,

derstanding where the most select geniuses of ^{SECT.}_{VI.} every enlightened age united all their efforts, could do little towards this great discovery. They could do no more than the assistance of art hath enabled the eye to do in surveying the starry firmament. The ablest reason, in its utmost cultivation, could just discern a faint light streaming through that dark expanse of night with which it was surrounded, from whence it might conjecture that there was a brighter world beyond. But this was a light too fine and dubious to be of any service to the vulgar sight, and which every passing cloud concealed even from the philosophic eye. The philosopher could exult in the pleasing theory of immortal happiness, but it generally failed even him when it was to be brought to the proof. Whereas the faith of a christian is a fixed and a steady light, which never deserts him, but shines the brightest in the darkest seasons of distress.

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It is the peculiar happiness of this dispensation that all this knowledge is made level to the meanest capacity. So that we may truly affirm, that the knowledge of all the sages of antiquity put together, is no more to be compared to the knowledge which is now in the power of the humblest christian, than the glimmering of a thousand stars to a sun-beam. A fact of so astonishing a nature, and ever before our eyes, is a public and a standing proof of the reality of that revelation in which we believe, and is alone sufficient to satisfy all gainfayers. It is a proof of the strongest kind, demonstrating the cause from its visible and lasting effects. The effect cannot be denied: it cannot be denied, that since the æra of the gospel, vulgar christianity hath excelled learned paganism in the most sublime and important branches of knowledge; nor is it possible to account for this effect on any other supposition, than that there was at that æra a revelation from heaven, a new communication
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of divine knowledge, a light derived from
above to lighten the Gentiles.

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But the action of faith upon the mind is not confined to the understanding. That light which enters in by the understanding beams into every part of the soul, and revives and invigorates all its other powers. Like the light of heaven, it brings with it a vital heat which warms the affections.

The influence which the understanding hath over the affections, is well known: and it is generally by seducing the understanding that vice maintains its dominion over us. Did we see clearly the true nature, and the different events of virtue and vice, our affections could not be so misplaced as they usually are. Religion shews us both: it shews us the naked deformity of vice, the poison that is mixed with its sweet intoxicating draught of pleasure, and the ruin in which its flowery paths
M terminate.

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terminate. It shews us the native charms of virtue, its manly and rational joys, and those pure streams of eternal pleasures by which it dwells for ever.

It would carry us far beyond our bounds to enter into every particular, and to shew how favourable the christian faith is to the production and encrease of every virtue. It will be sufficient briefly to shew how powerful an influence it hath in maintaining within us those two great principles of all virtue, the love of God, and the love of man.

The more we know of God, the more clearly we discover the justice of the Apostle's description, that "GOD IS LOVE." The whole of his works is but one grand demonstration, his various dispensations are but so many successive proofs, rising one above another, of this great truth. All that we see in the creation are but varied expressions of

of his goodness, and all our enjoyments testimonies of his love. They naturally therefore raise our minds to heaven. Wherever our affections may begin, they terminate in the Creator; and if they rest for a while on his works, it is only to gain strength that they may renew their flight upwards to the Giver of all good gifts.

But redemption takes up the tale which creation had begun, and in a language still more awakening, still infinitely more affecting, repeats to us the heavenly strain, that "GOD IS LOVE." Not content to have created an universe on purpose to bear witness to this, he sends the Lord of the universe himself to give us in person the strongest assurances of it. His own eternal Son vouchsafes to bring the commendations of his Father's love towards us. He veils the brightness of his glory, which we could not directly look upon, by cloathing himself in our nature; and softens the splendor of

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~ Divinity to the bearing of our sight, by tempering it with the milder rays of human virtue: that thus we might have for our imitation an example of perfection nearer to our own standard, and might receive expressions of divine love in the tenderest language of human affection.—But ah! what pledge of love is this which he is preparing to give, and what characters are these in which we see it written! What voice is that, which in the midst of the bitterest sufferings, and the most cruel tortures, speaks only of mercy and forgiveness! Why is he thus extended on the cross, why is his visage stained with those drops of blood, and why flows that purple stream from his side!—Ah! this is the great work of atonement; and he is now expiating the sins of a guilty world! Hear, oh heavens! and give ear, oh earth! He dies for those by whom he dies: and that very blood which mankind hath shed, was poured forth to testify his love of man!

Such

Such are the wonderful measures that SECT. VI. God hath taken to engage our affections. ~~~~~
And if we can feel all these blessings without any returns of gratitude on our part; if we, who were first raised from nothing into existence, and then again snatched from misery, and lifted to the hopes of immortal happiness, if we can forget the hand which did these great things for us, nor feel the love of God glowing in our breasts; then will the whole creation bear witness against us, that creation which hath in vain borne continual witness of the love of God towards us: then will that blood of our Redeemer also cry loudly against us; that blood which hath been in vain poured out for us.

With regard to our love of mankind, were we to recall every argument for our mutual affection that the gospel supplies us with, we must transcribe the gospel. It will be sufficient to urge the force of that general conclusion of the Apostle, "Belov-

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“ed, if God so loved us, we ought also to
“love one another.” Here we see the Apostle brings the whole weight of those considerations which arise from the divine love displayed in redemption, directly to enforce our love of each other, and makes all that hath been advanced in support of the love of God, an argument for our love of man. They are indeed kindred affections which open into and communicate with each other: and that love of God which springs up continually, and overflows in the heart of the true christian, feeds and maintains to an equal height the fountain of human love. For if we love our Redeemer, we must for our Redeemer’s sake love mankind. It was not for some select few alone, it was not for some favourite sect or party, it was not for some peculiar people that our Lord died, but for the whole race of sinful men. He gave his life a ransom for many, and nothing less than a world was a fit object of his redeeming love. To every individual there-
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fore amongst mankind the force of the A-^{SECT. VI.}
postle's general conclusion is clearly applica-
ble. Beloved, if God so loved *him* as to
send his only begotten Son into the world,
to be the propitiation of *his* sins, surely then
we are bound by the strongest obligations
to love him likewise. For if there be any
one man, how mean, how miserable, how
contemptible soever he may seem; if there
be any one whom we dare to think unwor-
thy of our love, we thereby have the pre-
sumption to oppose our opinion to that of
our Saviour, who hath declared him not
unworthy of his. Oh you then, who har-
bour in your breasts any dark and unfriend-
ly passion; you who listening only to the
dictates of resentment, are preparing for
your brother the whole weight of your re-
venge: look up before you execute your fa-
tal purpose; look thro' those mists of passion
with which you are now blinded, and be-
hold him whom you were about to strike en-
circled in the arms of your Redeemer!

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So powerfully doth redemption strengthen all the bonds of mutual affection between us, exalting benevolence into charity and brotherly love.

Having thus laid the foundation of all social virtues, faith proceeds no less effectually to provide for the security of those which more immediately respect ourselves. For we cannot have a nobler motive to engage us in the cultivation of all personal virtues, than the consciousness of that dignity and worth to which our nature is now exalted. Had we been to die for ever, and after a few years of precarious being here, to sink into the earth, and to mingle with our native dust, never more to be awakened to life or sense, the wisest thing we could have done would have been to crowd into our short span of existence all the enjoyments we could meet with. But redemption hath set us free from the hard laws of mortality after submitting to them for a while,

while, and hath begotten us again unto a ^{SECT.}
lively hope of eternal happiness. We are ^{VI.}
born to the highest expectations, and there
is no degree of excellence which we may
not aspire after in that endless progress of
improvement to which we are destined.
And shall beings of that high rank to which
we now belong, shall the sons of immorta-
lity, and the heirs of an heavenly kingdom,
stoop to seek their happiness in common
with the brutes that perish, amongst low
carnal indulgences and sensual pleasures?
It would be the height of baseness as well as
folly, thus to degrade our souls for which
our Saviour paid so high a price, to sacri-
fice eternity to a moment, for a few drops
of fugitive and deceitful pleasure to give up
those rivers of pleasure at God's right hand
which shall never be exhausted, or for any
bribe that this world can offer to resign our
right to that inheritance incorruptible and
undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved
in heaven for us.

After

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After gaining so considerable a part of the mind, the remainder will be easy to subdue the will also to the service of virtue, and thereby to restore it to its freedom. For what the understanding approves, and the affections embrace, will not easily be rejected by the will. All the motives that have been received into the mind by them, are prepared and disposed by them to act upon the will with the greatest force. When virtue appears to the mind in all those advantages which it derives from revelation, in all that celestial light and beauty which shine through the understanding, and command the affections, the will remains no longer in suspense, but yields itself entirely to the heavenly attraction.

That the assent of the will should follow the other faculties of the mind, and should give way to the same powerful application of faith by which they had been before gained, must appear very natural. But
it

it may not perhaps be so readily understood, SECT.
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how by this means the will is restored to its freedom. To comprehend this effect it must be observed, that the will of man is not a detached and independent power, whose business it is to act alone, and to move merely for the sake of its own motion. The will of man is in a state of the closest connection with the other powers of the mind, upon which it acts, and is reciprocally acted upon by them. It concurs in all their operations. and unites in the minutest movements of every part of the mind. Hence what we call the freedom of the will, may perhaps be as well expressed by the freedom of the whole mind. At least the freedom of the will implies thus much, and may perhaps be better comprehended by some when thus expressed.

It follows, that in order to maintain the freedom of the will, the whole mind must be well adjusted and duly regulated: and if
any

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any of its powers are disturbed, the freedom of the will, that is, the ease and free motion of the mind, is necessarily impeded. The disorder does not terminate in that part where it began, but on account of the general influence of all the parts on each other, spreads in some measure through the whole frame, and is immediately communicated to the will, whose exercise depends on the free use of every part. If the understanding, for instance, is wholly unenlightened and sunk in ignorance, you may suppose, if you please, the will to be perfect in itself, and to retain its own power of free motion; but what can be the use of such a power, where it is constantly in danger of being misled by its false views of every object? In this state it resembles a prisoner set at liberty in profound darkness, who is then indeed able to move freely, but the next step he takes may as well lead him to a precipice, as into the path he wants to pursue. The same holds with still greater force

force as to the affections. The affections ^{SECT. VI.} are much stronger principles of action than the understanding, and operate with more violence. If therefore they are not under a due regulation, but are attached to low and unworthy objects, the will must necessarily receive a wrong bias from them, and be drawn blindly after them. If again the understanding and the affections are at variance with each other, the whole mind is then in a state of distraction and tumult. All its powers, instead of concurring in one general operation, act in opposition to each other, and thereby clog and retard each others motions. The will makes some faint effort, some ineffectual struggles for liberty; but the event generally is, that the strongest power prevails at last: the passions grow impetuous, and bear down all before them; they cloud and absorb the light of the understanding, and drag the will after them in chains.

This

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~ This effect of vice and corruption is thus beautifully pictured by Solomon. “ His
“ own iniquities shall take the wicked, and
“ he shall be holden with the cords of his
“ sins.” ^a

As the liberty of the will is lost by disorders arising in the other powers of the mind, so it can be no otherwise restored than by reducing those powers into order. And this is the effect which, as we have seen, faith produces on the mind. On the introduction of that heavenly principle, the ferment of the soul subsides, all its jarring powers are reconciled, and that union restored amongst them which is necessary to its liberty and perfection. The mind of man in its fallen state resembles an admirable machine out of order. Those finer springs and movements which were formed
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^a Prov. v. 22.

to obey the touch of virtue, were all injured and disturbed; so that it required some new regulating power, some additional impulse to put them in motion. Faith is that regulating power, which retouches this admirable machine, and gives it again its free and natural motion. SECT.
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This whole doctrine is stated in the clearest manner by our blessed Lord himself, in a discourse which he held with some Jews that had believed on him^b. The influence which the understanding hath in restoring the liberty of the will, is expressly pointed out by him in these words: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The Jews, supposing him to speak of a release from civil bondage, answered with a warmth proceeding from a jealousy of their civil liberties, "We be
" Abraham's

^b John, chapter viii.

SECT. VI. “ Abraham’s seed : we were never in bondage to any man : how sayest thou then, “ ye shall be made free ? ” Our Lord then explains his meaning clearly, and tells them that he spake of moral and spiritual liberty, which is lost by sin, and can only be restored in its highest perfection by the power of religion. “ Whosoever committeth sin, saith he, is the servant of sin : but if the Son “ shall make you free, then shall ye be free “ indeed.”

Upon the whole, the natural operation of faith upon the mind, is to enlighten the understanding, to recall the affections into their proper channel, and to break those fetters by which the will was held in bondage. It insinuates itself into every part of the mind, circulates its healing virtues through the whole extent of the soul, and thereby restores health to its constitution.

I shall conclude this part of my subject by
pointing

pointing out in a few words one strong character of distinction which meets us here, between our true religion, and that prevailing enthusiasm which is only an unhappy abuse of it. SECT.
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Enthusiasm confines the action of faith upon the soul chiefly to one part of it, neither admitting in religion the use of the understanding, nor the exercise of the free will. By which scheme it both dishonours our holy faith, by thus narrowing and contracting its influence, and instead of healing the natural disorders of the soul, fixes and confirms them. Instead of exalting the understanding, it degrades that heaven-born faculty, and chains it down to the earth, holding it unworthy of assisting in divine things. Instead of vindicating and restoring the liberty of the will, by reducing it to a passive subjection under certain irresistible feelings and impulses, it doth in reality load it with a double chain. Principles which

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are

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are so far from reducing the mind into a state of compofure and union, that they tend only to unhinge it ftill more than ever, and leave it in a ftate of the utmoft diftraction, by placing its powers in oppofition to each other, and raifing one in a moft extraordinary and unnatural manner above the reft. I wifh that this were fpeculation only, and that experience did not too manifefly confirm what hath been here advanced, concerning that diftraction and diforder of mind to which thefe principles lead.

Enthufiafm indeed warms the affections, and kindles them often to an uncommon degree of fervour. But the heat of enthufiafm is the heat of difeafe, which inflames a part only, and thereby weakens and confumes the mind, inftead of giving ftrength to it.

Obferve then the fuperiority of that religion of the gofpel, whole genuine operations

tions upon the mind we have been attempting to describe, over this defective and partial plan. The genial warmth of true religion diffuses itself equally through the whole frame of the mind, and imparts life and vigour wherever it is felt. This genial warmth not only glows in the affections, but awakens to new life every faculty of the soul, and calls them forth to unite all their powers in the service of him, whose wisdom first gave being to the harmonious composition of the human soul, and when it had unhappily fallen into disorder, whose mercy contrived the means of raising it again from its ruins, and exalting it to more than its first perfection. In a word, the religion of a true christian is “ the religion of his reason, the religion of his affections, and the religion of his will.”

SECTION VII.

*Of Regeneration.*SECT.
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IF we call to mind the powerful effects of faith upon the soul, where it is duly cultivated and improved; how it enlightens the understanding, regulates the affections, and restores the freedom of the will: if we add to this the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit co-operating to the same great end: we cannot be at a loss to comprehend those various expressions of the new testament which represent the soul, when restored to that perfection to which it may be carried under the christian dispensation, as the peculiar workmanship of God, as in a state of new birth, or of a new creation.

But as this doctrine of christianity hath
been

been often grossly misunderstood, and this is ^{SECT. VII.} the peculiar region of our holy faith, where enthusiasm seems to think itself most securely established; let us endeavour in the

First place, to obtain a clear and distinct notion of christian regeneration. And then we shall discern,

Secondly, how naturally it leads us to the practice of good works: that being the grand aim of the whole christian institution; that being the very end and design, as we are expressly assured by Saint Paul, of this our new creation, for “we are God’s workmanship, faith the Apostle, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”^a

In the first place let us endeavour to obtain

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^a Eph. ii. 10.

SECT.
VII.

tain a clear and distinct notion of christian regeneration.

Now by this, and other expressions in scripture of equal force, it is evident, that we must understand in general that change which is wrought in the mind by those powers which in the christian dispensation are made to act upon it. A change, as we have already seen, from darkness to light, from confusion to order, from slavery to freedom. The tendency of faith to produce this change hath been fully considered. The Holy Spirit, we are assured, concurs in all these operations of faith. “ For it is by the
“ Spirit of wisdom that our understandings
“ are enlightened: it is by the Spirit that
“ we are rooted and grounded in love; and
“ that our souls are purified in obeying the
“ truth: it is by the Spirit that we are cal-
“ led unto liberty, for where the Spirit of
“ the Lord is, there is liberty: in a word,
“ it is by the Spirit that all our infirmities
“ are

“ are helped, and that we are strengthened
 “ with might in the inner man.” ^b

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It follows clearly then that the great change we speak of is produced in the mind by the concurring operation of faith and the Holy Spirit. The united agency of this inward and this outward power, enables the soul gradually to throw off its corruption, and works it into an holy and an heavenly frame. It receives from our holy faith the purest principles of virtue, at the same time that it receives from the Spirit the ability and disposition to act up to those principles.

There are three expressions which are in their turns made use of by St. Paul to signify the virtue of the christian dispensation, as opposed to the inefficacy of ritual obser-

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vances.

^b Eph. i. 17. 1. Pet. i. 22. Gal. v. 13. 2. Cor. iii. 17. Rom. viii. 26. Eph. iii. 16. 71.

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VII.

vances. “Neither circumcision availeth
“any thing, faith he, nor uncircumcision,
“but faith working by love—but a new
“creature—but keeping the commandments
“of God.”^c These three expressions there-
fore being in their turns opposed to the
same thing, must be equivalent, pointing
out the power of the christian dispensation
by three of its capital parts. The first of
these, “faith working by love,” denotes
the efficient cause, or operating power: the
second, “a new creature,” the inward
change in disposition and principle wrought
by that power: the third, “keeping the
commandments of God,” the outward
change of action and conduct, which is the
result of that inward change of mind and
principle, and the ultimate and final effect
of faith.

Here

^c Gal. v. 6. vi. 15. 1. Cor. vii. 19.

Here then we have a compleat representation of the christian life. We see it in its first principles, in its internal constitution, and in a state of action.

Life implies much more than mere existence. It implies the use of those vital powers and principles which belong to each several order of beings, and without which they would exist to no purpose. When we speak of life therefore, the term must vary according to the rank of being to which it is applied. It must have a greater, or a less compass of meaning, as we speak of beings formed for nobler or for lower purposes. Life in beings endowed with sense alone, must mean the sensitive life only. But in beings, who have spirit and intelligence added to sense, it implies more; it implies the exercise of those superior, spiritual, and intellectual powers. If man then, neglecting all his nobler faculties, should confine himself entirely to the use and enjoyment of the
animal

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animal functions, he can no longer be said to enjoy the life of man, but sinks himself down to the level of mere animal life. But if again, in this degraded state, he should recover the use of his better faculties, he then rises once more to the human and intellectual life.

Upon these principles it is that our sacred writers proceed, when they every where speak of virtue as the life of the human soul, and of sin as its death. "To be carnally minded is death: but be spiritually minded is life and peace. How just is this language, and with what propriety do they represent the life formed on christian principles as a new life, and the man who embraces those principles as born to new life, and becoming a new creature! For surely man, whose soul is illuminated with all the glorious light, and strengthened with all the powers of christianity; man, whose actions are formed on the sublimest principles, whom the purest virtue conducts to the
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most exalted happiness; man, reaching forward to the perfection of his nature, and grasping immortality; must be different from man sunk in ignorance and error, from man groveling on the earth, and never raising his eyes above its surface, but going round and round its narrow circle in a vain search of happiness which cannot be found. Surely man moving aloft in the christian system, is a being of an higher order, than man moving in the broken system of fallen nature.

Such is the clear account of that regeneration, or state of new life, of which the gospel speaks: in which every thing appears founded on reasons of the strictest propriety, and than which nothing can be more easily comprehended. But are there not men to whom it will seem too clear, and who are displeased with every attempt to free the doctrines of the gospel from that obscurity in which they love to behold them? Men
who

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who seem weary of that dispensation of light under which we have the happiness to live, and willing to retire back again amongst the types and shadows of the Mosaic institution? Such men seem to speak and write as if they were persuaded that the christian regeneration implied the actual creation and infusion of a new soul. An opinion which a moment's reflection will shew to be alike rejected by reason and revelation.

For if this idea were just, and if a christian were a new creature in the most literal sense of the expression, then in the instant of this new creation, all the former furniture and endowments of his mind must be swept away, all traces of his former knowledge must be obliterated, and the memory of them entirely blotted out. The new convert would stand like Adam amidst the new creation, without any ideas but such as had been immediately stamped upon his mind by the hand of his Creator. But that this is the case

case of the regenerate I suppose no one will be bold enough to affirm. Should it in contradiction to sense and experience, be affirmed, yet can it never be reconciled with that duty of repentance which the gospel requires from all its converts, and which evidently supposes a retrospect into the actions of their former life, of which they must therefore retain the remembrance, and for which the present man is accountable.

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If in the act of regeneration there were really the infusion of a new soul, as they who contend for the literal acceptation of the expressions, *a new creature*, and *a new birth*, must suppose, then must that soul be allowed to come spotless out of the hands of its Creator. In this case, it must either continue in a state of sinless purity, a condition which it is to be feared would exclude all mankind from the title of regenerate, and which can neither be reconciled with the experience of the best christians, nor with
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the continual admonitions of scripture to amendment and repentance; or if it should fall from that purity, it must itself stand as much in need of redemption as the former polluted soul; that is, according to this notion of redemption, of being again supplied by a new soul; and so a succession of souls in the same man would take place.

Indeed this literal acceptation of the new birth is utterly inconsistent with the very idea of a redemption. The creation of a new soul is an act of infinite power alone, to which the death of a redeemer seems to have no relation. His death could be no more necessary to such an act of infinite power, to the creation of a new soul at this time, than it was at the first creation of things. Redemption necessarily implies the redemption of the sinful and polluted soul, of that very soul which had lost its created purity, and forfeited its first happiness. And we see the wonderful propriety,

priety, we feel the efficacy of a Saviour's dying to promote this great end. Agreeable to this is the language of scripture, which every where speaks of redemption as a purifying and an healing act; and of those who enjoy the benefit of it, as in a state of restoration and recovery.

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But may not this restoration and recovery be the instantaneous effect of the Holy Spirit's operation on the soul? To judge how far regeneration may be an instantaneous act, we must call to mind that connection which hath already been taken notice of between the influence of the Spirit and the influence of faith. The purifying and healing of the soul is the effect of their joint action. And since the progress of faith through the soul must be gradual, it seems to follow clearly, that this effect of their joint action must be progressive likewise.

Our blessed Lord in that pathetic discourse

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course delivered to his disciples just before his passion drew on, and the glorious address to his Father with which it is concluded, clearly points out the means by which the conversion and sanctification of the world were to be carried on. With regard to the apostles themselves, he affirms, that even "they were made clean through the word which he had spoken unto them." "I have given unto them the words which thou, O Father, gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. Sanctify them," he adds afterwards, "through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." In this passage

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sage we see clearly by what channel the stream of sanctification is derived from our Saviour to the world. The apostles received from our Lord himself that word of divine truth, which by their word and ministry was to be conveyed to all mankind. Whence it is manifest, that the external revelation of divine truth which our Saviour hath communicated to mankind by the inspired writings of his apostles, was given as the established means of their conversion and sanctification.

Since then there are two distinct powers concerned in producing this great change in the soul, it follows, that they must regulate each other's motions. Whatever therefore might be supposed, were the enquiry only about the secret and invisible operations of the Spirit, yet since these operations are conducted by the known rule of God's revealed word, we cannot be at a loss how to determine the question before us. For unless

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the whole gospel can in an instant be lodged in the soul, the complete recovery of the soul which depends on the gospel, cannot be instantaneous. Its improvement must be gradual, whilst under the guidance of the Spirit, it discovers by degrees all the treasures of revelation, and imbibes daily more and more of that sanctifying truth of which our Lord speaks.

This corresponds exactly with the language of the inspired writers, who every where represent the christian life as a state of continual improvement. They speak of the new converts to christianity “ as in a state
“ of infancy, as new-born babes, and such
“ as have need of milk, and not of strong
“ meat.” They speak of them “ as grow-
“ ing up to maturity from this state of
“ childhood, by means of that nourishment
“ which they receive from the sincere milk
“ of the word; as adding to their faith
“ virtue, and to virtue knowledge; as ad-
“ vancing

“ vancing from the first principles of the
“ christian doctrine, and going on unto
“ perfection, as growing at once in grace,
“ and in the knowledge of our Lord and
“ Saviour, till at last they come in the uni-
“ ty of the faith, and of the knowledge of
“ the Son of God, unto a perfect man, un-
“ to the measure of the stature of the fulness
“ of Christ.”

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VII.

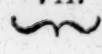
They, therefore, who fancy that they feel a power in regeneration which instantly renews their souls, and brings them to a state of sinless perfection, and that by the sole action of the Holy Spirit, without the use or application of any external means, do but amuse themselves with visions as void of all support in sense and experience, as in the revealed word of God. For according to them, our Lord came down from heaven to teach mankind the way to salvation; he lived and died to establish amongst them that revelation which he brought from hea-

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ven; he appointed chosen witnesses, who under the peculiar guidance of the holy Inspirer, recorded this revelation for the universal good of all mankind, and sealed the record with their blood: and yet after all, the Inspirer himself sets aside the use of that word which he inspired, and by his own single and miraculous influence on the soul, obtains all the ends for which the revelation was given. According to them, the Holy Spirit hath publicly established the means of grace and spiritual improvement, and yet doth privately in every particular instance render the application of those means unnecessary. According to them, the whole glorious structure of the christian dispensation, which heaven-directed men have with so much labour brought to perfection, that structure which rises on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, is a work that might well have been spared: since instead of our receiving any support from the Apostles

Apostles and Prophets, instead of our being formed into that building fitly framed together, every one, according to them, is built only on the foundation of his own personal feelings, and guided, independently of all others, by particular communications of the Spirit made in secret to himself alone. SECT.
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Upon the whole; with regard to the christian regeneration we may venture to conclude, that the change which the soul undergoes, is not a total and substantial change, is not the acquisition of a new soul, but a recovery and restoration of its whole frame and constitution, from sickness and disorder to harmony and health: that this change is produced by the concurrent influence of faith and the Holy Spirit; faith filling the soul with the sublimest principles of virtue, and the Holy Spirit disposing and exciting all its powers to act according to those principles: and consequently that the part which the Holy Spirit takes in the

SECT.
VII.  work of regeneration is by no means to inspire, by no means to infuse into the soul new revelations, but to strengthen and sustain it in following the light of that common revelation, which he hath already inspired and promulgated for the use of all mankind.

SECTION

SECTION VIII.

Of good works.

REGENERATION being no other SECT.
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than the entire possession of the soul 
by the principles and powers of christianity,
whereby its evil dispositions are subdued, and
it is gradually wrought into an holy and an
heavenly frame, we cannot but discern how
naturally it must lead to the practice of good
works. Virtuous action is indeed the grand
aim of the whole christian institution: it is
the very end and design, as we are expressly
assured by Saint Paul, of our new creation,
for “we are God’s workmanship, faith the
“Apostle, created in Christ Jesus unto good
“works.”^d

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^d Eph. ii. 10.

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Were it possible in surveying the christian system not to perceive how directly it is calculated to answer this great end, we should want one of the noblest proofs which we now enjoy of the wisdom and goodness of Him who formed it. THE POWER OF MAKING US GOOD is the greatest glory of the christian dispensation; and they who would deny it this power, rob it of that jewel which shines the brightest in its heavenly crown, and fix upon it a calumny greater than all its enemies have ever been able to invent against it.

The design of redemption was to restore man to that happiness which he had lost by sin. To have relieved his misery only without taking any measures to remove his guilt, would have been removing the effect and leaving the cause in its full force again to operate the same effect. A redemption undertaken on account of sin must certainly have been aimed against sin itself, otherwise
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the enemy would be left in full possession of his conquest. To suppose that the Redeemer came only to deliver us from the punishment of sin without delivering us from its power, is to suppose that he came in fact to take away a discouragement to sin, by removing its penalty. His mercy thus confined would hardly deserve the name of mercy: it would be mercy to sense only, whilst it was denied to our nobler, our spiritual and intellectual part.

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But these unworthy notions of redemption will not stand a moment before the light of the gospel. The very first intimation of the great design shews us that our Saviour undertook to bruise the serpent's head: that is, not only to obviate some ill effects of his power, but to destroy his power itself. To make us happy, and yet to leave us under the dominion of sin, seems to be one of those contradictions which Omnipotence itself cannot effect. At least we are assured that

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that redemption is very far from any attempt thus to do violence to the nature of things, by connecting happiness with vice, which can only be the natural parent of misery. Redemption goes at once to the very source of all our sufferings, and applies its healing virtue to cure the soul of that disease from which all its misery springs. Redemption acts in perfect conformity with the first sacred establishment of heaven; and leads us to happiness by forming us to the practice of virtue, the only way to happiness that either revelation or experience have ever pointed out.

Every part of the christian dispensation is manifestly adapted to answer this great end, to train us up to the exercise of goodness, and to qualify us for virtuous action. For to what other end doth our holy faith inspire us with all its principles of virtue? Why doth it, like Moses, striking a rock, open the fountain of divine love in our heart,

heart, and cause the love of man to spring from the love of our Redeemer; why doth it enlighten us with all its laws of heavenly goodness; why point to the bright example of a Saviour walking before us in the path of active virtue; why doth it try to move us by all the power of those awful sanctions which belong to our holy religion? Why still farther, doth the Holy Spirit join his influence to that of faith, and give new strength and vigour to our souls; why are we endowed with all these principles and powers of action, if yet the christian life is not a life of action, and if all is to end only in some brisk emotion of the spirits, and some inward agitation of the mind? When “the man of God is thus adapted and thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” how strange a doctrine is that which will yet adventure to say, that he is designed for no kind of work; and when all these principles and springs of action are in motion within him, would at that instant fix him motionless,

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motionless, blast all his powers, and freeze him as it were into inaction! As well may we suppose that when the Creator fashioned this animated clay, and breathed into it the breath of life; when he furnished it with limbs, with nerves, joints, and muscles, and all its numberless instruments of motion, he never yet intended that the human body should move; as to suppose that this new workmanship of God, created, and in every respect furnished unto good works, was never intended for the practice of those works for which it is expressly formed.

The gift of the power certainly implies and requires the use and right application of that power: and that indeed not only in the case of the finished and enlightened christian, but universally and in all cases, as far as the power and light for the direction of that power, have been communicated.

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All our blessed Lord's doctrines are full of precepts and motives to action. And in those beautiful parables in which his doctrines were often couched, he continually represents the christian as in a state of action. He represents him as a Servant bound to do the will of his master; as a Labourer in a vineyard; as one entrusted with a Talent which it was his duty to improve. And the other inspired writers, in perfect correspondence with their Master, represent the christian life under the same kind of images, as under those of a pilgrimage, a race, and a state of warfare.

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The very notion of a state of trial in which we are here placed, implies the necessity of forming our lives and guiding our whole conduct according to some rule by which they must be hereafter reviewed. And in our Lord's description of that grand scene by which this probationary system shall be closed, he hath fully assured us, that

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that we shall be called to a strict account for our use of all the talents entrusted to us; and that the chief enquiry, on the event of which our eternal lot must be decided, will be, how we have obeyed the dictates of that humanity and benevolence to others with which our holy faith is calculated to inspire us. Nor need we be surpris'd that on this occasion no mention is made of faith itself, though faith is certainly prescribed as the leading condition of our salvation; since an enquiry after the fruits of faith is in effect an enquiry after faith itself: and at the same time this proceeding of our Judge clearly shews us, that faith is valuable in his sight only in proportion to the fruits it produces, and the good works to which it leads us.

No one can be ignorant that there are in the holy scriptures numberless precepts of virtue, and rules, examples, and motives to sanctity of life. But to what end are they placed

placed there, if not to influence our practice? Take away every part of scripture that doth not relate to faith, and you will reduce it to a very small volume. Separate the rules of faith and the rules of practice into two distinct bodies, and you will find the latter far to exceed the former in dimensions. Which is easily to be accounted for, if practice is to be our study as well as faith. For then since faith is but a single act, and practice extends thro' every part of life, it is clearly seen why that part of scripture should be the most extensive, which relates to the most extensive part of our duty. But if we suppose, that when faith is once acquired the christian is completely finished, and that he is to rest in faith, and hath no concern with works; then it seems impossible to account for the conduct of the Holy Spirit in saying so much about works which do not belong to us, and contracting into so small a size that

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VIII.  part of scripture in which alone we are interested.

The question in short is reduced to this, Whether it is of any consequence that we should obey our Master's will, or not: and whether the greatest part of the scriptures is not entirely superfluous, and all the divine commands contained in them absolutely without a meaning?

Upon the whole then we may conclude, that the design of christianity doth by no means terminate in faith, but that faith is that good tree, which by our own assiduous cultivation, and the influence of God's Holy Spirit, bringeth forth good fruit: and therefore that good works in connection with faith, and springing from that holy principle, are absolutely necessary to complete the christian character. Our Saviour is the vine, and we are the branches. If we abide in the vine, and maintain our
union

union with it, if we abide in a faithful attachment to our Lord and Saviour, we shall derive from that sacred stock to which we belong a vital juice, which will give us daily new force and vigour, and enable us to bring forth much fruit.

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Faith shall end with time. Its whole business is answered in this life: and in heaven it shall have no existence. But virtue shall be immortal: and that plant, which in this cold region is barely kept alive by the warmth of the heavenly principle within us, shall, when it comes to its native soil, flourish without the support of faith. Surely therefore, amongst candidates for heaven, that which will for ever flourish there should be cultivated at least as much as that which will there be done away. The virtuous disposition, benevolence and charity, the love of God and the love of man, shall accompany us to heaven, and become a source of endless bliss springing

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VIII. up and encreasing to all eternity. But
when we shall be borne to that pure and
blissful region on angels wings, faith shall
then be left behind us with this perishing
world.

SECTION

SECTION IX.

Objections considered.

TO that way of explaining the christian doctrine, which having shewn the direct tendency of every part of the gospel-dispensation, and of every principle it employs to produce good works, concludes the necessity of associating good works with faith, in order to fulfil the design, and to obtain the end of our calling, some no doubt will have their objections.

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It will be proper therefore to take notice of the most considerable and most popular of those objections which may probably arise.

And first, it will be pretended, that by the doctrine of good works we assume a merit to ourselves, set up a claim to happi-

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IX.

ness founded on that merit, and thereby arrogantly presume to share with our Saviour in the work of salvation.

In answer to this let it be observed, that strictly speaking there can be no merit in any created being. It can never do more than what is answerable to the powers and faculties with which it is endowed. But all its powers and faculties are the gift of the Creator; and therefore no use or application of them can ever cancel the debt of the original gift. Strictly speaking, therefore, no created being can have merit, so as to form upon it any claim of happiness from his Creator, or to entitle him to any degree of reward, otherwise than as the free gift and voluntary appointment of God himself.

Yet there may and must be amongst those creatures of God, whom he hath endowed with any degree of free-will, and a power of directing their own conduct, amongst

mongst such there must be a relative merit, <sup>SECT.
IX.</sup>
and a comparative goodness.

All actions cannot appear alike in the sight of that " God of knowledge, who " sees all our ways, and counts all our " steps, and by whom we are assured that " our actions are weighed *." Neither therefore can all agents be equally acceptable to him.

God hath given in trust to man various powers and abilities, by a right application of which he is enabled at once to advance his own happiness, and to promote the happiness of others; or by a contrary use of them, to disturb the peace of mankind, and bring on his own ruin. For he hath linked us to each other by so strong a chain,
P 3 that

* Job xxxi. 6. and 1. Sam. ii. 3.

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that there is no solitary road to happiness or misery. If we would be happy, we must seek the happiness of others; and if we promote the ruin of others, we must be miserable ourselves. It is then by the strong sanction of happiness or misery, that we are engaged in the exercise of social virtue. And because those actions which we call virtuous, are calculated to promote the good of others, therefore they are distinguished by the name of "good works." This therefore is not a name which human pride idolizing its own merit, hath given them, but it is a name founded as we see in reason, nay more, a name by which those actions are constantly denoted in the sacred writings. Which renders it the more surprizing, that any set of men should have the boldness, under any pretence whatsoever, to appear against them, since they do thereby oppose both the authority and the language of the gospel, which abounds with precepts and motives

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to virtuous actions under the express name
of GOOD WORKS. *.

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* Because this circumstance must surely have been overlooked by those who make it their business constantly to declaim against good works, and to discourage us from every attempt to perform them, by persuading us that we are wholly unfit for the godlike exercise of doing good; I shall therefore subjoin a few of those numerous passages in which good works are expressly recommended to our practice.

“ This is a faithful saying, says Saint Paul to Titus, and
“ these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they
“ which have believed in God be careful to maintain *good*
“ *works.*” You see Saint Paul directs his disciple to
affirm constantly, to make it the constant subject of his
preaching, that all christians, *all who have believed*, should
be careful *to maintain good works.* “ Charge them that
“ are rich in this world,” says the same apostle to Timo-
thy, another of his disciples, whom he is instructing in
what manner he ought to preach the gospel, “ charge them
“ that they *do good*, that they be rich in *good works.*” In
his epistle to the Romans he assures us, “ that God will
“ render to every man according to his deeds; tribulation
“ and anguish upon every soul of man *that doeth evil*,
“ but

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In the original constitution of things, had that remained uninjured, man, by employing

“ but glory, honour, and peace to every man *that doeth good.*” He exhorts us to “ consider one another to provoke unto love and to *good works*; and never to be weary in *well-doing*, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

Hear our Saviour himself, who went about “ doing good,” that we might follow his example: “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your *good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” *Well-done*, “ thou good and faithful servant,” are the terms in which he expresses his approbation of him who had improved the talents entrusted to him. “ Marvel not at this,” are his own awful words on another solemn occasion, “ for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have *done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have *done evil*, unto the resurrection of damnation.” So that, according to our Saviour, if we would obtain *the resurrection of life*, we must *do good*; if we *do evil*, we must be doomed to *the resurrection of damnation.*”

Many other passages might be added to the same purpose, but they can escape no one who reads the holy scriptures.

How

playing his abilities in obedience to the <sup>SECT.
IX.</sup> will of his Creator, and in promoting the good of his fellow-creatures, could not have failed of securing his own happiness. In that situation he would have obtained happiness with less assistance than what we under the gospel enjoy; and yet even then his happiness could by no means have been esteemed his own proper acquisition, or a debt due to his merit, but the free-gift of God, who in his wisdom planned that constitution, and the result of wise laws established

How amazing then is it after all this, that any set of men should have the presumption to oppose the doctrine of *good works*, and openly to preach against it! How amazing that these men should meet with their admirers and their followers, in a country where the gospel lies open to every Christian! Our Saviour preached good works: his apostles preached good works: these men loudly decry them: and yet these are the men who assume to themselves the title of the only gospel preachers.

“ Choose you this day, O house of Israel, whom ye
“ will serve.”

^{SECT.}
^{XI.}  blished by him for the common good, and for the encouragement of man in a right use of his faculties.

In the dispensation founded on redemption, the trust to man is enlarged. He is here, in the language of scripture, “thoroughly furnished unto all good works:” all his powers of doing good to others are strengthened and encreased: he receives new light for the direction of those powers, and is called to the exertion of them by the strongest motives to benevolence and charity that can be conceived. If he makes a proper use of these superior advantages, he will be entitled to that exalted happiness which is provided for the encouragement of virtue under this dispensation. The merit in the mean while is entirely his, who procured these advantages for us. The whole merit of salvation is our Redeemer’s; he alone could and did purchase it for us, and prescribed the conditions on which we are to

to obtain it. By endeavouring to perform <sup>SECT.
IX.</sup> his will, we do not pretend to lessen the merit of what he hath done for us ; but, on the contrary, to avail ourselves of it. We have not the presumption to think of saving ourselves, since we cannot do that without settling the terms of our salvation. It is not to redeem himself, or to merit redemption, that the Christian does good, but to obey the will of him by whose merits he hath been redeemed, and in consequence of those advantages which he hath obtained by redemption. His good works are not laid as the foundation of redemption, but are built upon it. His hopes do not rest on human merit, but on the Rock of Salvation, the merits of his Redeemer.

Whilst therefore the best Christian must own himself an unprofitable servant, having done only that which was his duty to do ; yet there is undoubtedly, in the sight of his Redeemer, a wide difference between that good and faithful servant, who improves
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the talent entrusted to him by his Lord, and makes a right use of those inestimable advantages which redemption puts in his power, and that unprofitable servant who abuses or neglects them. And it is surely no less disparaging of the merits of redemption to say, that by it, and the helps which we have obtained in consequence of it, we can do nothing good, than to say, that we can do every thing without it. They who maintain the sufficiency of unassisted nature, deny only the necessity of redemption: they who maintain the insufficiency of nature after grace, to do any thing good or acceptable in the sight of God, deny the power, and depreciate the effects of redemption.

It will be considered by some as a second objection, that our Lord hath expressly promised salvation to faith, without mentioning good works.

Faith is the leading condition of our salvation, and the foundation of all other christian

stian doctrines and virtues. We cannot wonder therefore, since through the door of faith we enter into the christian dispensation, that all the blessings of that dispensation are said to belong to faith; and that salvation itself is annexed to faith, in which it terminates at last, though through many intermediate steps. SECT.
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Our Saviour's doctrine is to be taken from the whole gospel, which was delivered by degrees. When he lays the foundation of his religion, it is with the utmost propriety that he annexes salvation to faith, which is the basis of that religion, and condemnation to infidelity. But since we find these sanctions elsewhere most commonly applied to a life of virtue, and a life of wickedness, this explains our Lord's meaning beyond a doubt, and shews that he considers faith as the basis of good works, and infidelity as the root of wickedness; and that he ascribes to faith in general what belongs to it, when producing all its proper and natural effects upon the believer.

But

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But it will be urged farther, that Saint Paul attributes salvation to faith, and expressly excludes works.

And here it must be laid down as a maxim, to which all parties are alike bound to assent, that the holy scripture must be so explained as to be every where in perfect consistence with itself. When therefore we meet with any passage of scripture that will admit of two different meanings, one of which sets it in strong opposition to numberless other passages in the sacred writings, which cannot be mistaken, then this rule of consistency obliges us to reject that meaning.

Now this is exactly the case with the passage of Saint Paul alluded to. For if it be taken in that rigorous sense, which makes it utterly exclude the duty and the doctrine of good works from the business of our salvation, then it is made to overthrow a doctrine which it is the business of almost the whole

whole gospel to advance; then is it at variance with a plain passage in Saint James, with which it hath been often contrasted; and then is Saint Paul himself made to explode in one chapter a doctrine which he labours to establish in every other; since there never was a more zealous preacher, or a more finished pattern of good works, our Saviour alone excepted, than the great apostle of the Gentiles was.

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This explanation therefore must undoubtedly be laid aside, which makes Saint Paul contradict himself, and every other sacred writer. It must be laid aside, if there is another plain and consistent sense to be found, by which the harmony of the sacred writers may be preserved.

And yet it must be acknowledged, that there is little satisfaction to be found in that opinion, which confines what Saint Paul here says of the invalidity of works, to the ceremonial works of the Jewish law only.

His

SECT. IX. His argument manifestly requires, that the
“ law of works,” here spoken of, should be
taken in a much greater latitude.

The apostle undertook to shew the necessity of redemption to the circumstances of mankind, and to prove, “ that the gospel alone contained the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.” To this end had he contented himself with proving only the insufficiency of the ceremonial works of the Jewish law to obtain our salvation, and proceeded no farther, his conclusion would by no means have followed. The general necessity of redemption for all mankind, could never have been inferred from the deficiency of a partial law respecting one single people. Saint Paul was too great a master of reasoning to frame his argument in a manner so inconclusive. He takes a larger compass, reviews the whole world, and from the common incapacity of all mankind to save themselves, infers the necessity

necessity of a redemption. He first confi-
ders the state of the Gentile world, and then
of the Jews, and shews by undeniable facts,
that "all have sinned, and come short of
"the glory of God." By an appeal to their
own respective laws, both must be con-
demned, and "all the world become guil-
"ty before God." In this situation man
could have no resource but in "the free
"grace of God, through the redemption
"that is in Jesus Christ." For if works of
any kind could have saved him, he then
could have saved himself, and redemption
would have been an unnecessary thing.
"Therefore we conclude, that a man is jus-
"tified by faith without the deeds of the
"law;" whatever that law may be, whe-
ther the moral law delivered by Moses, or
that law of which the more enlightened
Heathen boasted, the law of reason and con-
science implanted in their breasts. For it
was impossible that he could be justified by
a law of which he was convicted as a trans-
gressor;

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gressors; and which was therefore so far from covering his guilt, that it must bear testimony against it. A law of works can only justify those by whom it hath never been violated. Sinful man can never be saved by a law which he cannot fulfil. He must rest all his hopes only on that free mercy, on that “righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe.”

Such is the strong and irresistible train of reasoning, by which this great apostle excludes all works of our own from the ability of saving us, and establisheth his first position, “that the gospel of Christ alone is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

But though he makes this just estimate of all human performances, denying to them a power which indeed they cannot claim, a
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power of saving us; yet is he so far from SECT.
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discouraging or depreciating our endeavours to do good, so far from giving countenance to that pernicious doctrine of the sufficiency of a quiescent and inactive faith, that he appears evidently to have laid the foundation of faith so deeply in the beginning of his epistle, with no other view, than that he might raise upon it more securely the doctrine of good works. With what a generous warmth of indignation doth he combat that impious tenet which would reconcile a continuance in sin with a state of grace! And with what strength of argument doth he apply every principle of our holy faith to the support of virtue; shewing clearly, that Christians are bound to devote themselves and all their faculties to its service; to yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and all their members as instruments of righteousness; animating us to a patient perseverance in well-doing, by the prospect of that glory, honour, and immortality,

SECT.
IX.  tality, which will by our righteous Judge be rendered to every man that *worketh good*, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; and proving that there is no other way of obtaining the end of our faith, everlasting life, but by maintaining our freedom from sin, becoming the servants of God, and having our fruit unto holiness.

Nay, he not only enforces in general the obligations to sanctity of life and manners, which our holy profession lays upon us; but after having established these fundamental truths, he descends to particulars, and towards the conclusion of his epistle draws out from the principles of our faith the most finished system of all relative and social duties that ever was delineated by the pen of man.

It appears then from this short review of the epistle to the Romans, an epistle so just-ly

ly celebrated, but in general so little under-
stood, that the doctrine which Saint Paul
effectually establishes in it is, that we can
only be saved by that dispensation whose ba-
sis is faith, and whose superstructure is
good works; it being clearly impossible that
sinners should ever obtain salvation under
any dispensation whose basis is good works
and unfinning obedience.

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A doctrine, which is so far from standing
in opposition to what Saint James hath ad-
vanced on the same subject, that it clearly
resolves itself into the very doctrine which
that apostle hath established, that “ by
“ works faith is made perfect.”

I cannot conclude this head with more
propriety than in the words of Saint Igna-
tius, in his epistle to the Ephesians, as a
doctrine perfectly corresponding with that
of the inspired Apostles, which we have
Q 3 been

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XI. been considering, and as the clear result of the whole, that “faith is the beginning or the principle, and charity the end or the completion of the christian life*.”

SECTION

* Ων ουδεν λανθανει υμας, εαν τελειως εις Ιησουν Χριστον εχητε την πισιν και την αγαπην, ητις ειν αρχη ζωης και τελος αρχ ημεν πισις, τελος δε αγαπη. Epist. ad Ephes. sec. 14.

SECTION X.

The Conclusion.

I Now beg leave to conclude the whole sub-<sup>SECT.
X.</sup>
ject with an address, first to those who maintaining the sufficiency of reason, do blindly reject the assistance of revelation: and secondly, to those who imagine, that revelation doth wholly supersede the use of reason, and exclude its exercise from the noblest subject on which it can be employed, the subject of religion.

And first, let the advocates of unassisted reason “ produce their cause, and bring “ forth their strong reasons” in support of it. That first structure of religion, wherein human reason and human virtue might have had a greater share, was laid in ruins by

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man's first disobedience. By redemption our system of duty is now placed on a new and a firmer basis, it is strengthened in all its parts, and new re-inforcements given to virtue, which was become too feeble to sustain itself. But how vainly do you attempt to rear again that system which hath been long since overthrown; and labour by your own strength to repair the ruins of fallen nature! An attempt not unlike that of those infidels, who in defiance of the decrees of Omnipotence, undertook to erect again the fallen temple of Jerufalem. Their design was blasted by heaven.

You must allow that virtue in a state of nature is insufficient for its own support. Why then, if you are truly lovers of virtue, why will you rob it of all those new and powerful helps which it receives from religion, "nor hear that virtue, which you
" love, complain?"

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It is on your own principles that we embrace faith. Reason leads us to faith. Reason pleads for it, and shews it to be every way worthy of God, every way calculated to promote the dignity of human nature. Reason flies to faith as its only protector, as the only ally that can rescue it from the tyranny of the passions under which it groans, from that base slavery to the inferior part by which it is so shamefully degraded, sunk below itself, and disabled in all its noblest operations.

They misrepresent faith who say, that like a false ally it would enslave that very reason which it was called in to defend. Reason is never so free as when united to faith: all its faculties are strengthened, and all its aims exalted. Its sphere of action is enlarged, new fields of contemplation are laid open before it, where it finds for its exercise objects of the noblest nature, with which it was before little acquainted; and
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its glorious views are now extended far beyond that narrow circle within which they were before confined, even into a boundless eternity.

But what wonder that by one party revelation is mistaken for the enemy of reason, when by another, reason is constantly represented as the enemy of revelation?

Little do these mistaken advocates of religion consider how much an unskilful defence may injure a cause which they no doubt mean to serve; and how much strength they add to the real adversaries of religion, whilst by a charge so groundless they attempt to force into rebellion one of its surest friends.

It cannot be, that redemption, which was given to improve and exalt our nature, should thus degrade it, by despoiling us of the noblest endowment with which the Omnipotent had distinguished us above the rest
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of the lower creation. It is reason alone that renders us worthy of salvation. Take away reason, and man will not be worth saving. Nothing will remain but blind passions, and groveling appetites. Nothing but the brute.

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And how shall salvation be addressed to such a being? Without reason, and free-will that belongs to reason, he can neither apprehend the terms of salvation, nor fulfil them. He can neither apprehend our Saviour's merits, nor follow his example. Without reason there can be no faith; the evidence, and the motives of religion are all lost. Man is no longer capable of knowing, of loving, of serving his God and his Redeemer. As rational indeed would be the attempt of that supposed Saint, who is said to have preached the gospel to the inhabitants of the air and of the deep, as to preach salvation to man, if you suppose him without reason; or, which amounts to the same thing, that his reason is of no use in religion.

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Can there be a clearer proof, that God intended we should make use of our understanding in his service, than that he hath every way applied and suited his religion to our understanding? Why hath he so admirably fitted out his system of religious laws, and all that bright display of evidence with which they are attended, compleating the design with so much beauty, fixing every part with such nice propriety, and adjusting the whole with such due proportion, that we cannot cease to admire it; but the more we enquire, the more we discover throughout of wisdom and admirable contrivance: why is this ample and this glorious field prepared for the exercise of our reason, if yet our reason must be restrained from entering upon it?

Can it be, that it should be a sacrilege for the understanding to lay hold of that knowledge which the gospel holds forth to it? Can it be, that its sacred truths are no better than the fruit of that antient tree of
trial

trial which it will be death for our reason to taste? Shall we charge the Creator with giving reason and truth in vain? Reason not to be exercised, and truth not be understood?

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Indeed the necessity of reason in apprehending the evidences of revelation hath been so often urged, and is in itself so extremely obvious, that even they who seem most inclined to prevent its entrance on the sacred ground, and to send it an exile into the world of nature, have been compelled to admit its right of proceeding thus far. But they seem not to be aware that the use of reason is no less necessary in every part of religion than in the bare investigation of its evidence. It is as necessary to the knowledge of the laws of christianity, as of its evidence. The very existence of religion in the soul depends on the knowledge of God, the knowledge of our Redeemer, and the knowledge of ourselves. Take away knowledge from religion, and you leave nothing but intemperate zeal, wild enthusiasm, or dark superstition.

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superstition. Even in our devotions, if we must pray with the heart, and with all the warmth of pious affection, we are assured that we ought to pray with the understanding likewise. Petition, praise, and thanksgiving, if they are not accompanied with some knowledge of the grounds of those duties, as they are laid in a sense of our own wants, and of the infinite power and unbounded mercy of God, can never be esteemed a reasonable service.

When our Lord directs us to worship God in spirit and in truth, he enjoins the use of that power of the soul, without which truth itself cannot be distinguished. For by what other power but the understanding, can God be worshipped in truth? And which of our faculties shall take the lead in religious duties, when reason shall be excluded?

There is no character under which our Lord seems with so much pleasure to represent

sent his dispensation as that of truth. But ^{SECT.}_{X.} the understanding is the only seat of truth ; of revealed truth as much as of every other kind. Truth can be embraced only by the understanding, to which it is as evidently related as light is to the power of vision. The establishment of the object supposes the use of the corresponding faculty, without which, in vain would the object be established. As clearly then as the light, poured out upon the face of the creation, points out the use of vision, so clearly doth that truth, which shines through every part of revelation, point out the use of that faculty, by which alone truth is comprehended and discerned.

No one fact is more clear in the whole history of the human mind, than that reason hath been improved by revelation. It is undeniable, that the efforts of the human mind have been much stronger, and its success much greater in deducing from their first principles, and explaining all the moral
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and social duties of life since the publication of the gospel, than they were before. And yet you will hardly venture to maintain, that the human mind doth now possess a native force surpassing that with which it was endowed in those bright periods of genius which preceded the introduction of the gospel: Experience therefore joins with revelation itself, in proving that the mind is so far from being weakened or depressed by the gospel, that it derives new strength from it, and is never cultivated with so much success, never yields so ample or so rich a produce, as where it lies open to the influence of the gospel.

Faith and reason are so far from being rivals, or adversaries, that there is the clearest relation, and the strictest union between them. Reason without faith is feeble and obscure. Faith without reason, if it is possible that there can be faith without reason, is no better than “ a light shining in
“ that darkness which comprehendeth it
“ not.”

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In a word, it cannot be that the mind ^{SECT. X.} should be obscured, and its light extinguished under a dispensation which was given expressly to remove the errors, and to lighten the darkness of our souls. Light is the favourite character by which the gospel is described both in the prophetic and the evangelical writings. Ours is the inestimable advantage of having our understandings conducted by that true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Ours is the unspeakable happiness to behold that glory which shines round the only-begotten of the Father, a glory as we are assured not supplied by grace alone, but formed by the mingled and united rays of GRACE and TRUTH.

To sum up all, faith is given for the improvement of the human soul; and all its powers, our reason, our affections, and our will, obtain their perfection by being exercised in its service. Faith is given to fit us for heaven; and, as far as we can apprehend, the chief pleasures even of a future

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state will be intellectual. Strange therefore indeed would it be to suppose that that faculty should have no concern in religion, which is to be the chief seat of our heavenly pleasures. Faith fills the soul with knowledge as well as virtue; and the truths, as well as the virtues, which it here imbibes from the gospel, shall exercise its growing faculties to all eternity. That dawning light of celestial truth which we here enjoy, shall in heaven encrease into a bright eternal day.

Faith is an instrument which the heavenly Agent employs for the amendment and sanctification of our souls. When faith shall be succeeded by perfect vision, the instrument shall be laid aside.

As the sun enlightens the material world, and shews us all the wonders of nature, so doth faith here enlighten the religious system. But the time will come, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and when faith shall be no more.

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